

# Reader's

JULY  
2015

## digest

₹75

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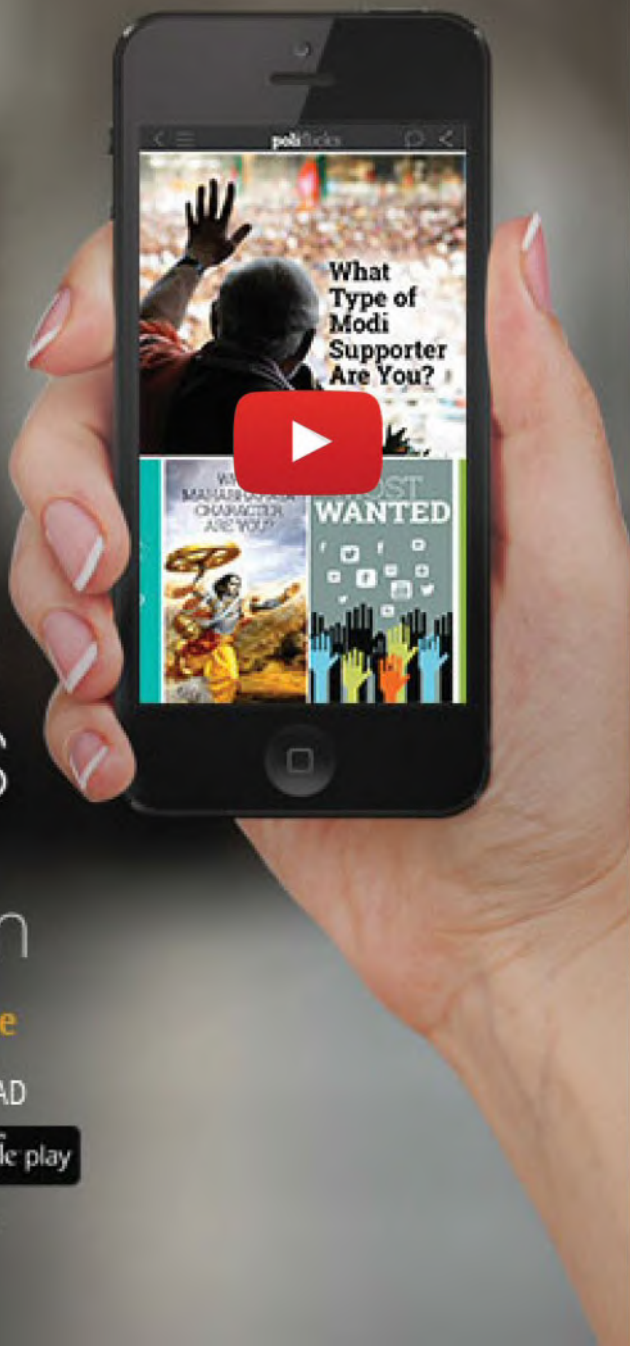


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# Editor's Note

## Of Ethics & Supermarkets

**I'VE OFTEN WONDERED** why some people who cheat, lie, are abusive or corrupt can also be fervently religious. How can they be so at odds with what their religion teaches? For them the rich values of religion are separate from their own poor ethics. This month's "RD Interview" (page 110) with the serene, ever-smiling Dalai Lama drives home the importance of ethics.

This is actually our second interview with the Dalai Lama. The last one, published in July 2003, too, was a heartwarming, witty dialogue where, again, he was frank and open, and like no other celibate religious leader. When asked, "As a monk, what experiences do you think you've missed that ordinary people have?" he pointed to his groin and answered with a hearty laugh, "I obviously missed this work." It was so down-to-earth and endearing that this remark got reprinted in newspapers across the world.

Speaking of ethics, let's consider supermarkets. They're clean and convenient. They sell at such tiny profits, they have to tempt you—with clever sales tricks—to buy impulsively and keep volumes up. Are those tricks unethical? Hard to say, since nobody is forcing us to spend. Even so, wouldn't you like to save money when you shop? So Digest Features Editor Snigdha (seated, in photo with Research Director Padmavathi, who fact-checked the article) interviewed many retail-industry insiders to

wheedle out little-known facts. Since such secrets are guarded, many of them refused to speak to Snigdha. It took persistence to find those who would, and for the story to make it to our cover. Now shop, without wasting a drop.

*Mohan Sivanand*

Send an e-mail to  
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# DON'T LET BLOCKED NOSE SPOIL YOUR GOOD MOMENTS.

## WHAT IS A BLOCKED NOSE?

Blocked nose is a condition in which a person is not able to breathe normally through the nose. This could be due to various reasons. One common reason is swollen inner lining of the nose. You can call it a "stuffy nose" or a "congested nose". A prolonged blocked nose may cause complaints in hearing, nasal twang in voice and mild headache.

A blocked nose can be caused by common cold, dust & pollution, seasonal changes, sinusitis or nasal allergic conditions.



**A blocked nose can affect anyone, anywhere and at any time. You should always be ready with a fast way of dealing with a blocked nose!**



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\* Mean onset of action – 25 seconds.

\* As per the Medical Audit (ESPRIT) MAT Aug 2014 dataset in terms of prescribers in the Topical Nasal Decongestants/Saline preparations/ Xylometazoline category.  
# Reinecke S and T Schalkin M. Investigation of the effect of oxymetazoline on the duration of rhinitis. Results of a placebo controlled, double blind study in patients with acute rhinitis. MMW-Fortschr Med.2005;147 (suppl 3): 113-118





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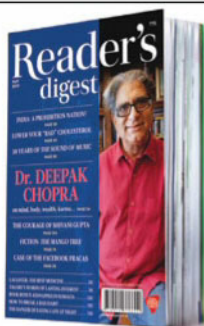
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takes is a small push  
to bring about a  
sweeping change.

# Letters

COMMENTS ON OUR RECENT ISSUES



## THE GOOD DOCTOR'S WORDS

Your lucid interview with Dr Deepak Chopra [Doctor Timeless, May] acquaints us with his efforts to combine eastern and western philosophies. His explanation of an “ageless body” sums up the holistic concept of the linkage and interdependence of all universal phenomena.

**DR R.P. MALEYVAR**, *New Delhi*

I have seen doctors, including seniors, being cynical and looking down on other streams of medicine and its practitioners—sometimes making nasty comments without a tinge of guilt. It's refreshing to have ideas like those of Dr Chopra, who promotes integrated medicine.

**DR NAHEEDAH ABDUL KHADAR**, *Kozhikode*

I would be very careful with the word “spiritual”—it's where all answers to all questions are dumped.

**DR S.S.N. RAO**, *Jamshedpur*

## SLEEPLESS IN THE CITY

What's more important than the hours is the quality and scheduling of sleep [That's Outrageous! May]. Many working women—and men—end up sleeping late not due to work but to satisfy addictions such as

watching TV and chatting on social media. **SANJEEV MATHUR**, *Greater Noida*

## FREE SPEECH?

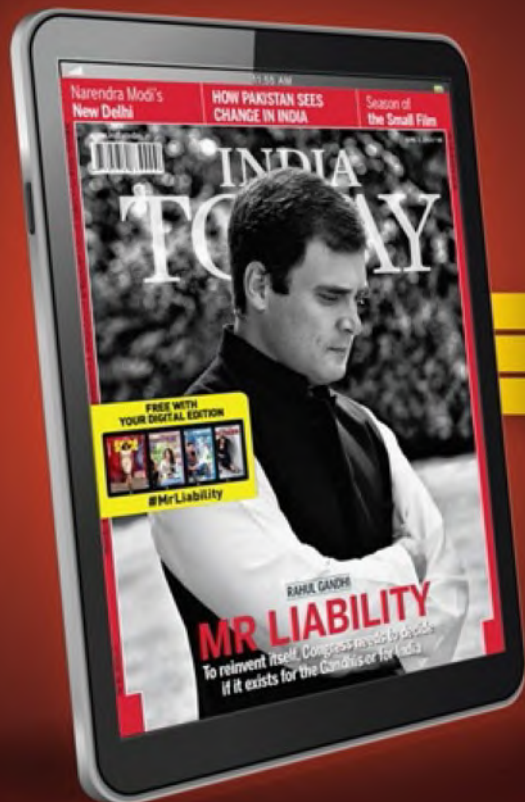
Shaheen and Rinu spoke the truth and were harassed [The Case of the Facebook Fracas, May]. I am afraid of posting anything on social media, and when I do, my parents caution me. Is it enough to amend laws to protect free speech when the mighty have other ways to get to you outside the law?

**MADHUR**, *via e-mail*

## PROHIBITION NATION

Politics didn't bother me much unless it had something to do with my life explicitly, but the things being criminalized recently has hit me hard [Ban De Mataram, May]. I took pride in India being quite liberal when it comes to not locking out access to websites, but

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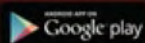
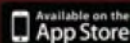
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even that is changing. I realize my responsibility to do something about this Big Brotheresque transformation that our Government is undergoing.

**SHYAM SENTHIL NATHAN** *via e-mail*

When a Batra says something wrong, or a *Satanic Verses* is sought to be banned, people must raise their voice as one by articulating their concerns on social media and in newspapers. As opposition to Valentine's Day and fashion shows has subsided, here too we can achieve the desired changes.

**DINESH SHAH**, *Vadodara*

## POEM FOR ALL MANKIND

My heart aches when I see fear, narrow-mindedness, hatred and intolerance all around [Where the Mind Is Without Fear..., May]. I pray for that heaven which Tagore yearns for. A few shining stars in a dark sky keep my hopes alive.

**ASHISH TRIVEDI**, *via e-mail*

Though every song in *Gitanjali* is divine, this poem against "narrow domestic walls" embodies the idea that humans need knowledge, reason and character. Now retired, I help aspiring armed forces officers whose personality training rests on these words of Tagore.

**MAJ GEN M.P.S. KANDAL (RETD)**, *via e-mail*

## WE NEED SAFER ROADS

"Shivani Gupta's Indomitable Accessibility" [May] made me think of our pathetic roads and the bad driving

## PAIN FOR THE BIRDS

The clouds of feathers at pillow fight festivals [See the World ... Differently, May] may convey joy and freedom for thousands of people, but they also represent the pain and trauma of innumerable birds whose feathers are pulled out to make these pillows and other down-filled stuff. There are down alternatives that will truly help us see the world differently.

**MADHU ROY**, *New Delhi*

*Madhu Roy gets this month's ₹1000 Best Letter prize.*

—EDS

habits of Indians, for which Shivani was punished twice, by becoming quadriplegic and losing her husband.

**DR BHUPINDER SINGH**, *Ludhiana*

## 50-YEAR-OLD FLICK

*The Sound of Music* may have completed 50 years [May] but for my family, the film has never aged. On hot summer afternoons we re-watch the film, laughing through the Captain's whistles; our eyes grow moist through Maria's difficulties and we heave a sigh of relief when they all manage to escape. Such family movies should be produced more frequently.

**MANJIREE DHODAPKAR**, *Pune*

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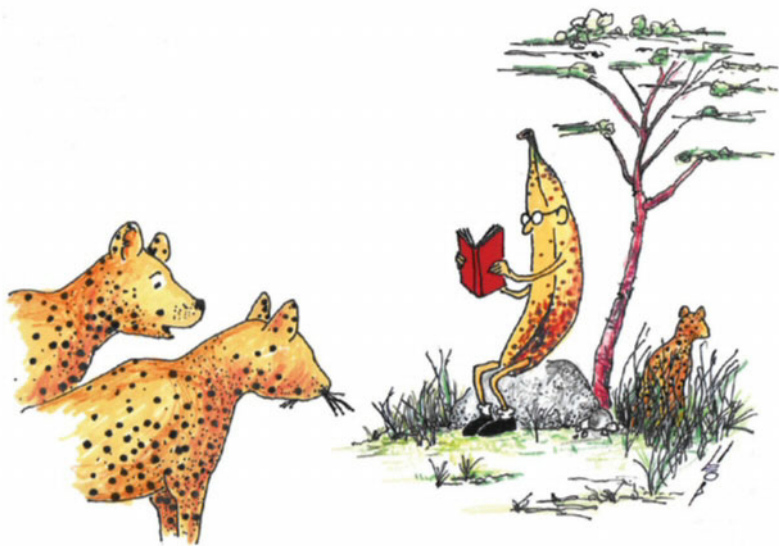
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# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



*"I'm telling you, Larry ... he's not one of us ..."*

## **I GOT MY HAIR HIGHLIGHTED**

because I thought some strands were more important than others.

**MITCH HEDBERG**, comedian

**A FARMER IS WONDERING** how many of his sheep have gone out to pasture, so he asks his sheepdog to count them.

"There are 40," says the dog upon his return.

"That can't be right," says the farmer. "I have only 38 in total." "I

know," says the dog. "But I rounded them up."

*From corsinet.com*

**MY NEIGHBOUR** is in the *Guinness World Records*. He has had 44 concussions. He lives very close to me. A stone's throw away, in fact.

**STEWART FRANCIS**, comedian

**GARY WAS HAVING** a yard sale. A priest bought a lawn mower but returned it a few days later, complaining that it wouldn't run. ➡

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FOR MANAGING TOMORROW

"It'll run," said Gary. "But you have to curse at it to get it started."

The minister was shocked. "I have not uttered a curse in 30 years."

"Just keep pulling on the starter rope—the words will come back to you."

LAVERNE LAUTERBACH

**I'M AT THE AGE** where I can't take anything with a grain of salt.

MATT WOHLFARTH, comedian

**I'M AT THE LIBRARY**, and for some reason, when I plug my flash drive into the computer, it doesn't show up. I keep trying, but nothing happens. As an IT major, I know I can figure this out. So I spend 15 minutes changing settings and inserting and removing the flash drive. Then a girl sitting next to me taps my shoulder and says, "You're plugging into my computer, not yours."

Source: [acidcow.com](http://acidcow.com)

**THE LATEST PARENTING** fads, according to *The Onion*:

■ As part of the new Infinity Womb trend, women are using a wide range of Lamaze, strength-training, and yoga techniques to forcefully prevent their children from ever leaving their wombs, forever protecting them from the harsh realities of the world.

## FAIR WARNING



As seen at a Hong Kong antique shop.

Submitted by ABHISHTA LALWANI

■ Meanwhile, some couples are waiting to announce their pregnancy until after their children have graduated college and become partners in successful law firms.

**A FARMER SEES** a chicken strutting across a rural highway. He shouts to her, "Hey, why are you crossing the road?"

The chicken replies, "To change a light bulb in the henhouse."

"Can you change it by yourself, or will you need help? In other words, how many chickens does it take to change a light bulb?"

Says the chicken, "Sorry, but that's the subject of another joke."

GARY JOHNSTON

**Teacher? Teacher!** Do you have fond memories of a teacher who brought out the best in you? And really cared for you. Tell us about the teacher's impact on your life for our Teacher's Day feature in Reader's Digest September. Write to the Editorial address or e-mail: [editor.india@rd.com](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)





Sometimes, you just can't  
stare blankly at a wall.  
Impressive **'Wild Rock'** theme  
by the New Spanish Collection.

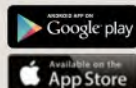
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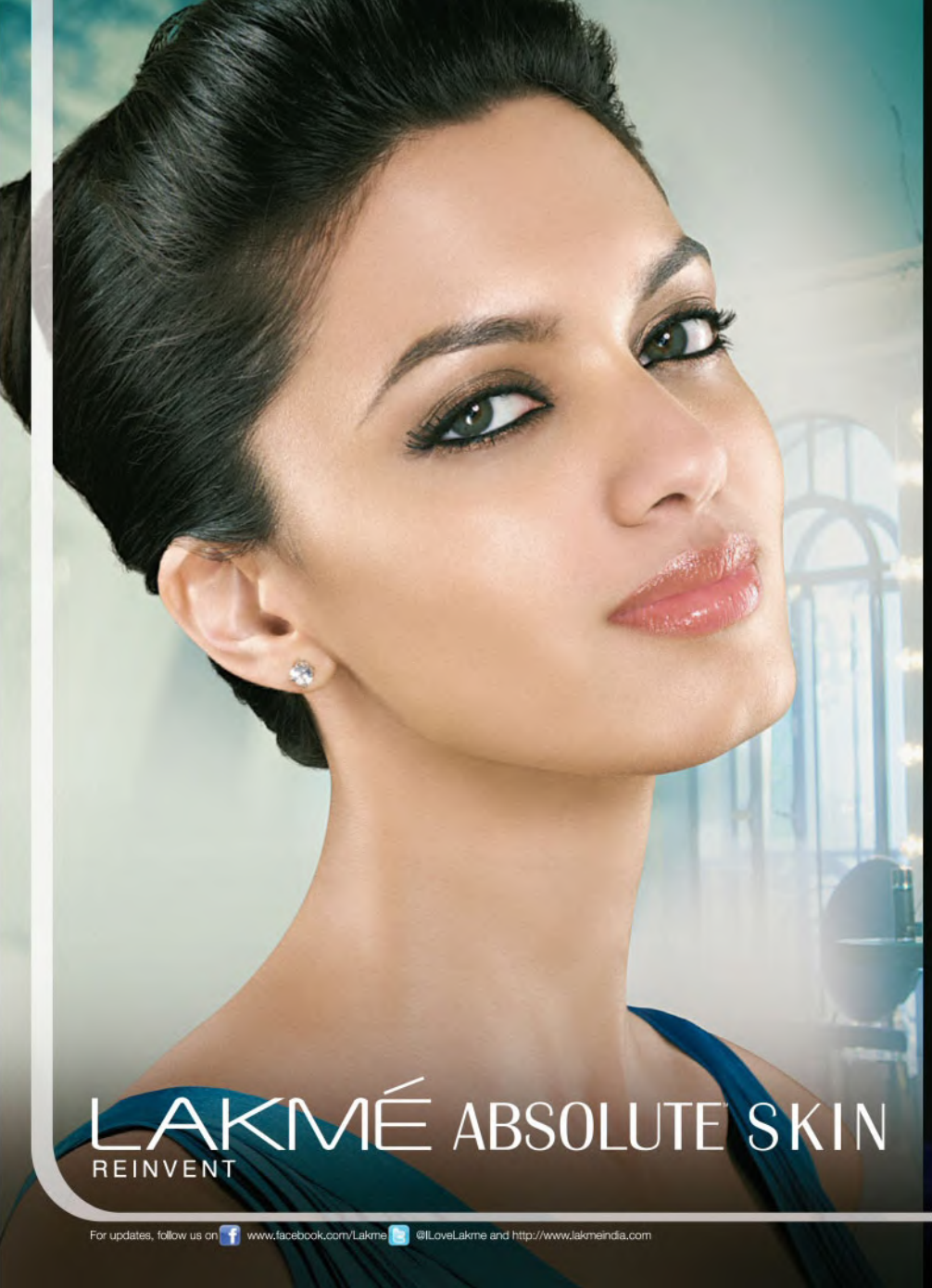
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# EVERYDAY HEROES



Reg Green has become a powerful and effective  
spokesman for organ donation

## Giving Life's Greatest Gift

BY ROBERT KIENER

 **ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN** more than 20 years since his seven-year-old son Nicholas was killed during a family vacation in Italy, for his father Reg Green, “sometimes it seems like yesterday.” Sitting near the pool at his home in Los Angeles, the white-haired, 86-year-old former Fleet Street journalist confesses, “There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t think of Nicholas and his funny little ways.”

Green and his wife Maggie were on a family holiday in 1994 with Nicholas, 7, and his sister Eleanor, 4,

travelling south from Naples on the *autostrada* when a car came alongside them. Inside were two masked men who yelled at the Greens to pull over. Without warning the highway bandits fired shots into the Greens’ car, first shattering the rear passenger window, then the driver’s window. Maggie quickly turned around to make sure the children were safe. Both appeared to be sleeping peacefully. Green managed to speed away and outpace the robbers, but when he and Maggie stopped at the scene of another





*Reg Green, 86, set out  
on this mission after he  
lost his little son.*

accident they noticed that Nicholas had been shot in the head. He was breathing but unconscious.

Two days later freckle-faced, fair-haired Nicholas Green was declared brain dead in a Sicilian hospital, hooked up to a wall of machines that kept his heart beating and his blood circulating. "It was obvious that Nicholas was gone," recalls Green as he explains how he and Maggie made the decision that would forever change their lives, and the lives of countless other people. "We asked if we could donate his organs. It was a way to alleviate some of the horror, and he didn't need that body any more."

Italians, who had been following Nicholas' shooting in the Italian media—newspapers had labelled it *La Nostra Vergogna*, ("Our Shame")—were galvanized by the Greens' generosity. Within hours seven Italians, several of whom were close to death, received Nicholas' heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas cells and both corneas. They quickly recovered. Their decision, Green later wrote in his book, *The Nicholas Effect*, "took the entire nation by storm." Journalists lined up to interview the Greens, they were feted by both Italy's Prime Minister

Silvio Berlusconi and President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

The couple realized that by telling their story they could spread the message about the importance of organ donation. As Green explains today, "I had found my life's work."

“  
***If the fire  
shows any signs  
of dying  
down, I will  
pour gasoline  
on it. It's that  
important.***”

**LIKE RIPPLES IN** a pond, the Green's decision to donate Nicholas' organs spread first across Italy, then Europe and eventually much of the world. Organ donations immediately shot up 25 percent in Italy, a country where organs had been in chronically short supply. They rose for ten straight years,

from 6.2 per million of population in 1993 to 19.7 per million, and have since remained steady (18.5 in 2013), saving thousands of lives. "The Nicholas Effect," as it has been dubbed, was recognized as the catalyst that changed the thinking of the nation.

**SINCE 1994 GREEN** has returned to Italy more than 50 times, as scores of villages and cities have honoured Nicholas by naming more than 100 schools, streets and squares after him. Green has also given hundreds of talks to medical and organ donation groups around the world.

Using money earned from speak-



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ing fees and film rights and their savings, the Greens established the Nicholas Green Foundation to promote organ donation awareness and have made and distributed over 5000 copies of a video about the subject. Green has flown some two million kilometres since 1994, speaking and urging people “to have a conversation about organ donation.”

“No one in the entire world has done more for public awareness in organ donation than Reg and Maggie Green,” says Howard M. Nathan, president and CEO of the Gift of Life Donor Program.

The need is staggering. In 2013, 70,000 people in the European Union were waiting for organ donations, with an average of 12 people dying each day. For the terminally ill patients and their families waiting for a much-needed organ, it is a matter of life and death.

Sadly, the need for organs is always greater than the supply. An Italian transplant surgeon at an event honouring Green took him aside and told him, “Right now I have two children in my hospital who will die if they don’t get lungs soon. If only we had Nicholas now.” Explains Green, “It’s comments like that that keep me going. I am simply amazed that our story is still moving people two decades later but if the fire shows any signs of dying down, I will pour gasoline on it. It’s that important.”

**THE COUPLE** receive a steady stream of letters, e-mails and phone calls from strangers telling them how close they feel to Nicholas and agreeing to work together to increase awareness. Last year an Italian government official from Calabria, the Italian region where Nicholas was shot, wrote to the Greens, explaining, “Everybody in Italy, and particularly in Calabria, carries in his heart little Nicholas and the noble example of kindness, love and civility of your family.”

Letters like that mean a lot to Reg Green. “People often bare their souls in these letters and we answer every one,” he explains. And he never turns down an interview request.

“It doesn’t get any easier,” says Green as he launches into a story about how Nicholas loved playing a game about being a heroic Roman soldier, just home from the front and honoured by generals and the public alike. “We told him he’d be immortalized in poetry and people would cheer him,” explains Green, with just a slight catch in his throat.

“And, in a way, all that did come true,” he continues. “Nicholas’s story captured people’s imagination and lit a spark of love in millions of hearts. If that isn’t immortality, it must surely come close.” **R**

More information: [www.NicholasGreen.org](http://www.NicholasGreen.org)





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## Creature Discomforts

BY NURY VITTACHI

☿ I'VE BEEN THINKING about gender issues recently, and not just while admiring my Hello Kitty collection. A book by a British historian revealed that the Allied forces had an interesting plan to take Hitler down—they were going to slowly turn him into a woman!

British spies contemplated slipping estrogen into Adolf's meals to make him less aggressive and more docile. Are you kidding me? These guys have obviously not been to a designer shoe sale—the level of aggression there rivals a wrestling match.

Gender issues are also on my mind because a reader sent me details of a particularly daring and creative recent criminal operation. A gang of villains had got hold of 70 male sheep genitalia and sewed them between the legs of 70 female sheep (the technical term being “ewes” or

in this particular case, ewww). The gang then tried to smuggle these poor creatures out of Sudan, which, because female livestock are considered more valuable, allows the export of male sheep only.

Border guards were about to let them through when, at the back of the flock, one particular ewe that obviously didn't get the memo decided that she really, really needed to go. The reader told me: “She did not go to the toilet like a male, but like a female,” which I took to mean that she didn't stand at the far end of a row of urinals with her eyes fixed pointedly downwards, but got together a group of girlfriends and they disappeared with their handbags for ten minutes.

The border guards were shocked. “These are girl sheep wearing sewn-on male genitalia!” they



exclaimed, and impounded the lot. The ewe-smugglers were incensed, which is hardly surprising. If you spent your whole weekend sewing genitalia onto live animals, wouldn't you expect some kind of pay off?

Strangely enough, this is not the only incident where one type of animal has been passed off as another. It happens more often than you think. Two years ago, a zoo in the People's Park of Luohe, in the central Chinese province of Henan, displayed a suspiciously compact creature in the enclosure labelled "African lion." When visitors approached, the creature started barking—revealing itself to be a dog with a creative haircut. It

was later revealed that the zoo's leopard was a fox and its wolf was a mongrel.

Meanwhile, at the Marah Land Zoo in Gaza City, the zebras were a pair of white donkeys painted with black stripes. After these cases were publicized, I suspect many small zoos around the world responded quickly to set things right and avoid legal liability—by re-labelling all their exhibits "Animal."

Speaking of animals, I need to go check on my dog now. You never know when Sudanese smugglers with sewing kits might show up.

**Nury Vittachi is a Hong Kong-based author. Read his blog at [Mrjam.org](http://Mrjam.org)**



An eminent Marathi writer provides a solution to help us be more creative and shape a more forward-looking culture

# Search and Re-search: The Challenge We Face

BY SHYAM MANOHAR



**PLAYWRIGHT, NOVELIST and retired physics professor, Manohar's works include the novels Kal and Khoop Lok Ahet. The 74-year-old author lives in Pune.**

ON A FULL MOON NIGHT we, that is the family and the house-help, an elderly granny, were on the terrace sipping coffee. "Back in the village, we girls used to sit out like this playing at counting stars," she said. "While counting, we would forget which star we had started with and where to end. We'd get so confused, we ended up laughing at ourselves."

As children we are eager to count the stars, but no method for doing so is at hand. We want to clean rivers. What is the method? We want to clean the city, regulate traffic, root out corruption. What is the method?

The big Indian problem is that we do not look for methods.

Dadasaheb Phalke saw a film in Mumbai. He became obsessed, went to England, learnt about cinematography, came back and made a film. Go to the West, learn, come back and do. This has become our method. That is how democracy came to us; how dress and customs came to us. If the West does not give us the know-how, we go to the basics and develop it. We call it, "completely Indian-made rocket." Re-search has been the way ever since India became independent. In literature too, it is re-search all the way from existentialism and absurdism to post-modernism.



## PRESERVING OUR CULTURE

So what is ours? The answer: It is all right to import technology and such-like things, but we must preserve our culture. This gave rise to ideas like there was calculus and aeronautics in the Vedas; Ganapati is an example of plastic surgery. So we have now begun re-searching the Vedas and the Puranas. Indians have become habituated to “re-search.” The habit of “search” has refused to form.

In literature, so far at least, old Indian texts are not being re-searched and held up before us as exemplars; but neither is search going on. Indian literature is thus only a reproduction of reality. Literature is a depiction of what is known. It is not surprising that society does not find such literature interesting. But literature is held up as the sign of an advanced culture. The state has created schemes to encourage literature and help its dissemination. There are awards for literature, literary conferences, book launches, readings from fiction and

poetry, seminars. What’s missing are up-to-date libraries. No political party has libraries on its agenda; nor do industrialists attach any importance to them.

When society has time, it humbly dips into literature. As long as literature is meek, society lets it be. But if it departs from meekness, then certain elements of society rise in anger and set about teaching it a lesson. They say, “We must preserve our culture.” The rest of society does not meddle in this. The state does not meddle in this.

What is the rest of society doing? It is worrying about its finances, its physical health, family, security. And what is the state doing? It is looking for a way in which it can take along casteism, religion, economic transactions, the wish to be strong, the desire to lead the world, clean rivers, create smart cities, produce new jobs, go to the moon, industrialization, agriculture, the share market, the Padma awards and leaders’ statues, so that it



may retain power while warning opponents against politicizing issues. It is looking for a way, not answers.

It is necessary to *search* in order to find answers.

Society and the state secretly believe that literature is not useful in solving society's problems. Openly they say only science can solve social problems. (Society and the state use the word *science* when they actually mean technology. Technology is seen as science. A technologist is called a scientist.)

### SOCIETY'S NEEDS

Our society's first need is to solve material problems. Its second need is religion. Society wants religious rituals. It also wants the philosophical principles of religion, that is, spirituality. People lose themselves in spirituality. Science and literature are fourth and fifth needs. It is generally accepted that no religious principles can help clean rivers and towns. But this, too, has been accepted secretly.

Take the example of greed, one of the six passions that beset human beings. Every religion teaches that greed is wrong. In Indian society, greed has led to the problem of financial corruption. How is greed to be overcome? What is the method for doing that? People do not have

the answer. Religion does not help in stopping financial corruption. Has Indian society managed to find a system that will not allow corruption to operate? The answer has to be no. Indian society is caught in the pathetic condition of not finding religion useful for material problems like cleaning rivers and towns, fighting corruption, and regulating traffic, and not being able to find a non-religious way to do it either.



***What is the  
universe?  
What is the  
meaning of life?  
It is these that  
must be  
searched.***

So we are offered symbolic and educational solutions. The culture of searching has simply not taken root in Indian civilization. Re-search has been its way for years.

What is it to search? What does one search for? The answer: You search for what is not known. The unknown

is not what one individual does not know. It is what humankind does not know—and the search is for that. It is not a matter of merely searching. The search must lead to discovery. The idea of search into the unknown is a thrilling fantasy. But the unknown is associated with things on the ground, with human beings, the universe, life.

What is Man? What is the universe? What is the meaning of life? Much of this is unknown to human beings. It is these that must be searched. ➤

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## THE INDIAN QUEST

When search becomes subservient to everyday life, it is not search at all. It is re-search. Search is search when it becomes a 24-hour preoccupation to which everyday life is subservient. Re-search is a transaction of our external lives. Search is a transaction of the internal mind. The mind senses an aspect of the unknown through intuition. If this aspect is merely disclosed, it becomes a revelation. An intuited hunch must be followed to its logical end and proved. You need to use the faculty of reason for this. When intuition and reason work together to search the unknown, they create a discipline of knowledge. Is such a search into the unknown happening in Indian society? The answer is no. Is it the belief of Indian society that there is nothing like the unknown? People of all religions believe that whatever there is to know has already been discovered by religion.

For example, let us ask, "What is death?" Every religion has an answer to this. And yet every person encounters events in life when the same question raises its head anew. An individual is looking for a fresh answer. Religion has answers for questions like what is the universe? What is the meaning of life? And yet human beings ask themselves these questions repeatedly. This means that the need for search is alive in them. But if the questions do not enter the inner mind, search is aborted. If a search

for the unknown enters the mind, it makes a human being creative.

Human beings fear allowing questions to enter their inner minds, because it is very painful to have them there. This pain is more intense than any other pain that we may experience physically or on the surface of the mind. Do Indians wish to avoid this pain?

## SOME PROBLEMS

There is another side to this question. Indian civilization appears to have decided that search is not possible when your financial state is not stable. If you look at the history of discoveries, it is obvious that this theory is patently false. Whoever wants to search must do so under their own steam. Human history, Indian history, is replete with examples of this. Even if they are not, there is no reason why such examples should not be created.

The search into the unknown is never undertaken by a collective. Society is eager to know the unknown; but the search itself must be conducted by individuals who will hand over their results to society. Culture is born of the search into the unknown. Culture helps develop ways of life, a civilization, traditions. Traditions are not to be preserved; nor are they to be deliberately broken. They are to be reformed by making the unknown known.

Fiction must seek what is unknown to humankind. Or take religion. No



DO YOU TOSS  
AND TURN  
IN BED,  
THE WHOLE  
NIGHT?

DID YOU  
COMPROMISE ON  
THE CHOICE  
OF YOUR  
MATTRESS?

**Sona** hai,  
to **Jaagiye!**

IS FINDING  
YOUR PREFERRED  
MATTRESS  
SURFACE  
IN YOUR BUDGET  
A PROBLEM?

DO YOU WISH  
THAT  
CHOOSING  
THE RIGHT  
MATTRESS SURFACE  
IS MADE EASIER?



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new religions have been established for centuries, and old ones continue to exist. And yet individuals want to discover who they are, their selfhood. Literature must aid individuals in finding their selfhood. Indeed, one may assert that literature is in fact inspired by the idea that human beings are looking for themselves. It is from this complex situation that the philosophy of literature is born. A forward-looking culture needs a literature that creates philosophy. Everyone should accept this challenge. I do so too.

Finally let me make a wish for all of us, including myself. Let us use every aspect of human civilization, including language, to discover something that is unknown to mankind. Don't stop at mere search. It is important to go further and discover. Understand that it is your responsibility alone to discover. Put aside spirituality and discover the process by which the ego may be eliminated.

And yes. All of this must happen in the inner mind. It is natural for questions to enter the inner mind. If the inner mind is cluttered with inessentials, then the way in is obstructed. Push such clutter to where it belongs—to the outer mind. Allow questions to reside in the inner mind. Endure the pain of it. That is when you begin to sense the creative impulse. Let creativity prove itself. Proof is important. Use reason to get there. Using reason is a mechanical process that is physically stressful.

Literature that is created in this way is original. Musicians will set it to melody; directors will put it on stage and screen; critics will remake literary forms. **R**

Condensed from Shyam Manohar's 10 January 2015 acceptance speech made after he received a lifetime achievement award for literature from the Maharashtra Foundation. Translated from the Marathi by Shanta Gokhale.

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## NO FREE LUNCH

A British man released his own pet rat in an all-you-can-eat buffet in an attempt to get out of paying his bill. Christopher Baker was eating a meal and had been drinking heavily. He decided to take the rat out of his pocket and let it loose, immediately causing disgust among other customers. The restaurant instantly offered him his money back, but when pest control arrived they could tell the rat was domesticated—because it had recently had a haircut.

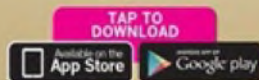
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# Humour in Uniform



*"Serves you right—I told you not to wear those to the beach."*

**WORKING AT** an Army hospital, I woke up one day with terrible back pain. I went to the sick hall, where I was told I'd be taken to the hospital. After an hour, the captain came over. "Sorry for the delay," he said. "But we can't find the ambulance driver." "Captain," I said, "I'm the ambulance driver."

JOSEPH DUNN

**WHEN SOMEBODY** from our unit retired or died, my clerk would draft a letter to settle matters like their

service benefits and pensions.

A new clerk, unfamiliar with the procedure, once filled out a discharge form instead and even signed it helpfully on behalf of the dead man. It read: "I, the late Sepoy Rathnam, wish to withdraw the entire balance in my provident fund account since I have died.

Signed,  
Sepoy Rathnam"

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A family trip turns tragic in ...

# The Case of the Passenger on the Platform

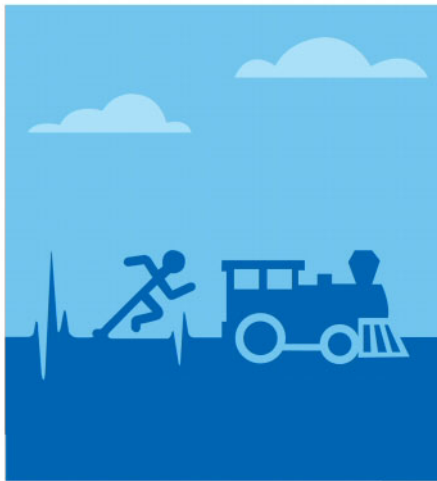
BY DEVEN KANAL

ON 4 MARCH 2007, Durai Somanathan bought train tickets at Dindigul station in Tamil Nadu for a 200-km trip to Kumbakonam with his wife Elambal and daughter Bhanumathi. The family boarded a train and began settling in, but at departure time they got a shock—they were on the wrong train!

Durai managed to alight, but as the train accelerated out of the station, his wife and daughter could not. Durai ran alongside the train, shouting for his wife and daughter to get off. Just then the middle-aged man collapsed and died.

The post-mortem revealed cardiac arrest and identified the death as from “natural causes.” Durai’s autopsy report also stated that his death was not due to a fall from the train as there was no physical injury to the body.

But the grieving family filed a claim with the Railway Claims Tribunal for a modest ₹4 lakh. On 21 July 2009, the Tribunal dismissed the claim, maintaining that although Durai Somanathan was a bona fide passenger, his case did not fall into the “untoward incident” provision under Section 123 of



the Railway Act, which would have made Southern Railway liable to pay compensation. The Somanathans then moved the Madras High Court.


*Was the Railway Claims Tribunal right in dismissing the case? Would Southern Railways be held liable for Durai Somanathan's death? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

On 17 September 2013, the Madras High Court ruled that Durai's death due to cardiac arrest on the Dindigul platform could be categorized as an "untoward incident," and directed Southern Railway to pay his legal heirs ₹4 lakh as compensation with interest. But Southern Railway appealed. In the Supreme Court, the Railway's lawyers argued that Durai's death could not be attributed to negligence, or even categorized as untoward, since he had also been undergoing treatment for chest pain for at least 10 years before his death.

Even so, on 22 January 2015, a Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice H.L. Dattu dismissed the appeal. It upheld the High Court order and directed Southern Railway to pay Durai's heirs ₹4 lakh with six percent interest. The Supreme Court felt that this amount was too meagre for Southern Railway to argue against. What's unusual is that the Bench, reports say, acted more out of compassion for the family rather than the letter of the law.

**Should such compassion be a criterion in more cases? Must this case, involving an unfortunate widow, have been dragged by a government agency up to the Supreme Court? Write to the Editorial address or e-mail: [editor.india@rd.com](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)** 



## A BAD SIGN?

**In a laundrette:** Automatic washing machines: please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.

**In an office kitchen:** After tea break staff should empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board.

**In a restaurant:** Customers who find our waiting staff rude should see the manager.

From [etni.org](http://etni.org)

# Points to Ponder

**"EVERYBODY YOU EVER** meet knows something you don't." A cab driver told me that 30 years ago, and I'm reminded of it every single day.

**BILL NYE,**  
*science educator, in Men's Journal*

**WE HAVE** a tendency to define ourselves in opposition to stuff ... But try to also express your passion for things you love. Be demonstrative and generous in your praise of those you admire. Send thank-you cards, and give standing ovations. Be pro-stuff, not just anti-stuff.

**TIM MINCHIN,**  
*comedian, in a commencement speech at the University of Western Australia*

**A THOUSAND WORDS** can be a lot of noise. Great music or cinema silences your soul, makes you listen to your inner self. A great picture too should be able to restore silence in you.

**RAGHU RAI,**  
*photographer, in Views on News*

**WITH 26 SHAPES** arranged in varying patterns, we can tell every story known to mankind and make up all the new ones ... If you can give language to experiences previously starved for it, you can make the world a better place.

**ANDREW SOLOMON,**  
*writer, in a speech at the Whiting Awards*



Everything in life boils down to this riddle: Are you what you think you are? The world will let you know whether you are a keeper or just recreational.

**BILL WITHERS, musician, in Garden & Gun**





There's a tremendous amount of power that comes from not having to say yes.

**JODIE FOSTER**, *actress*, in *Esquire*

**ETIQUETTE HAS** an evolutionary basis ... Humans question how to find mates, raise kids, get their fair share to eat, and resolve conflicts. If you're a chimpanzee or a wolf, your biology gives you the answers. If you're a human, you write to an advice columnist.

**ROBIN ABRAHAMS**,  
*etiquette columnist*,  
in *Boston Globe Magazine*

**SOME OF THE BEST IDEAS** come in the shower because, thank God, no one has invented a waterproof smartphone yet.

**ARIANNA HUFFINGTON**,  
*cofounder of the Huffington Post*, in a speech  
at the Simmons Leadership Conference

**WHAT I LIKE** to do is *do*—not the fact that I *did*. It doesn't excite me. When people start to think that what they did in the past is perhaps even better than what they do now, they should stop.

**KARL LAGERFELD**,  
*fashion designer*, in *The New York Times*

**MENTAL ILLNESS** is [our] secret. It is the secret we keep that prevents us from asking for the help we need.

**FRANK WARREN**,  
*creator of the PostSecret project*, on the  
Maryland Coalition for Mental Health Awareness website

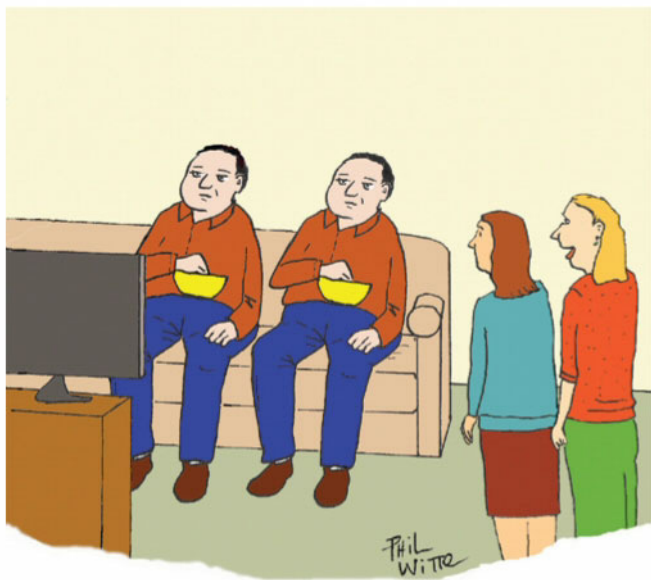
**WHEN WE WERE YOUNG ...** we knew basic history, even as it related to fashion. Now when something reappears, an 18-year-old has no clue that it's a revival. I think that's part of why visual things are becoming so derivative.

**FRAN LEBOWITZ**,  
*critic*, in *Elle*

**THEY TREAT YOU** very differently from other women [when you're seen as beautiful] ... You have to make people comfortable with you. Of course, I'm grateful beyond words that I had it, but beauty's very often the elephant in the room, and you're the elephant handler.

**CANDICE BERGEN**,  
*actress*, in *Time*

# Life's Like That



*"Guess which one I made with a 3-D printer."*

**MY SISTER DIDN'T DO** as well on her driving test as she'd hoped. It might have had something to do with how she completed this sentence: "When the \_\_\_\_\_ is dead, the car won't start."

She wrote "driver." **NATHAN HELLMAN**

**ONCE, AFTER** the Christmas vacations, I went to see Manjunath, my classmate who stayed near our school. I had entrusted the key to my hostel room with him. But Manjunath

was away in his grandma's village and his mother knew nothing about the key. I then went to his father's office and was glad he had the key.

Then, reaching my room, I opened my steel trunk, which had been left there. In it was a note from Manjunath. It said: "Venkatesha, please collect your key from my father."

**VENKATESHA H.H., Arcot, TN**

**MY 11-YEAR-OLD** grandson spent a beautiful Saturday playing video

games. His older sister tried coaxing him outside by warning, "Someday, you're going to be 30 years old, single, and living in Mom's basement playing video games all day!"

His reply: "I can only dream."

**SYLVIA CARDENAS**

**WANDERING INSIDE** a pet store, I stopped in front of a birdcage to admire a parakeet. We watched each other for a few minutes before it asked, "Can't you talk?"

**SHIRLEY BROWN**

**AFTER AN IMPROMPTU** song, our pastor asked the church pianist, "What key did I sing that in?" The pianist replied, "Most of them."

**JUDY SCHEFFEL**

**MY FIANCE** and I went to a counselor to work on our communication issues. Using herself as an example, the counsellor crossed her legs and her arms and exhaled loudly. I was about to say she was showing signs of frustration, but my fiance beat me to it, yelling, "I've got it! You're constipated!"

**TRACY VANCE**

**MY SON AND I** were checking out a house he was interested in buying. When the owner came to the door, she looked at me and said, "Larry? I know you. We went to school together. I'm Elaine. Don't you recognize me?"

I drew a complete blank.

She took out our old yearbook and showed me her graduation picture—still nothing. "Let's look at your picture," she said.

She flipped the pages until she came to me. Under my photo I had written, "Elaine, I will never forget you."

**LAWRENCE I. BRANT**

**DURING A VISIT** with my grandmother, my husband noticed a birthday card from a local funeral parlour. "That was nice of them," he said.

She was unimpressed. "They only want me for my body," she grumbled.

**CARMEN SCHMEISER**



## FUNNY FATHERS

■ Sometimes the scariest thing you can hear from your toddler is the question "Can I help?"

**@DADINATING**

■ Sometimes I am amazed that my wife and I created two human beings from scratch yet struggle to assemble the most basic of IKEA cabinets.

**@ASKDADBLOG (JOHN KINNEAR)**


■ Four-year-old: Tell me a scary story! Me: One time little people popped out of your mom, and they never stopped asking questions. Four-year-old: Why?

**@XPLODINGUNICORN**

# The title of my autobiography would be...

RD's Facebook friends were asked to consider writing their memoirs.



 To participate in our next "Finish This Sentence" feature, visit Reader's Digest India on Facebook.



# ART *of* LIVING

How to navigate the line  
between love and fantasy

## Soulmates: the Surprising Science

BY MATTHEW HAGUE

☞ **THE SOULMATE.** It's an ancient Greek ideal that survives to this day as a fixture of Harlequin novels and romantic movies. That predestined better half is out there (hopefully with a charming smile and eyes that sparkle like a glass of champagne). Once found, he or she will bring eternal bliss.

The potential benefits of such a vision are understandably appealing. Believing your partner was made just for you reinforces the positive aspects of your relationship and conveniently assigns some of the relationship heavy lifting to fate. ➤➤



Plus, who can deny the allure of “happily ever after”?

But don't leap into a long-term commitment simply because someone makes your heart beat with unusual gusto. Recent research, co-authored by Spike W.S. Lee, an assistant marketing professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, suggests that the idea of a soulmate might be the wrong way to frame a relationship. In fact, it may actually be detrimental to long-term contentment.

For the study, participants had to choose between phrases and images that indicated whether they felt that love was a search for The One or a lifelong, compromise-filled journey. Lee found that the soulmate group had significantly more negative thoughts when they reflected on conflicts in their relationships than the love-is-a-journey group. “People who view themselves as soulmates tend to be less satisfied when they think of the conflicts in their relationships,” he explains. “It's inevitable. In the soulmate frame, conflicts are bad. People think, Well, maybe we're not the perfect fit.”

Sue Johnson, a Canada-based psychologist, doesn't believe in the idea of a perfect fit. “Whoever came up with the idea should be boiled in oil,” she jokes. In her 2013 book *Love*



*Sense*, she takes a scientific approach to explain the benefits of close, long-term relationships.

For example, she points to a study that performed fMRI scans on the brains of happily coupled women and notes that even when facing an imminent threat, the subjects barely had a stress reaction as long as they were holding the hands of their loved ones. Women who were unhappily coupled saw a spike in their stress levels, hand holding or not.

But arriving at a strong place of comfort and trust takes effort, not just the “magic” of finding a soulmate. Through communication, collaboration and constructive conflict resolution, you can build and sustain happy and fulfilling relationships despite not being custom-built for each other from the outset. Which no one is.

One of the key components is responding to vulnerability. It's essential to have the courage to discuss your inner fears and hurt feelings and deep longings with a partner. “Freud said we are never so vulnerable as when we are in love,” says Johnson. But opening up can make us feel threatened or afraid or weak, and there's always the risk the other person won't respond well,

which is why wishful thinking takes hold and often wins out. It's simply easier (if not lazier).

Gary Direnfeld agrees that strong, lasting bonds don't just appear miraculously. As a social worker and the former host of a marriage-counselling TV show, *Newlywed Nearly Dead*, he has seen the inside of many tortured relationships. He also dismisses the idea of a soulmate as "a very Hollywood notion and not very realistic."

Instead, you can build the right relationship through trial, error and persistence. The hard part shouldn't be the exhaustive search for Mr or Ms Right (all those hours on dating and marriage websites notwithstanding); it's the feeling and dealing through everything that comes after that's harder. It's more of a slog but, in the end, more rewarding. "I advise people to date a lot, to really get to know each other before cohabiting," he says. That's because when a couple first meet, "there is an infatuation stage, and everyone is on their best behaviour."

But it's important to get past that, to a point where stress becomes a factor and different conflicts arise, to see how you each react, and to start seeing how and if a true partnership can develop.

Because, ultimately, it isn't the couples who had the most movie-worthy courtships that have long, happy unions. It's the couples who consistently try to see each other's viewpoints, responsively listen to each other and maintain a mutual respect that are going to last. And for people who can achieve that, as Johnson puts it, "that's when the real magic happens."

R



## LEXICON FOR TODAY

*Telethargy* (n.) Highly contagious feeling of lassitude and crankiness resulting from (for instance) watching too much Antiques Road Show, Dr Phil, or similar. For example: on a cold Sunday in August, Cliff and Brent meant to go out for brunch and maybe check out the flea markets. Instead they succumbed to telethargy for hours, watching terrible TV shows until they got headaches.

LIESL SCHILLINGER, from Wordbirds

Why scratching  
feels so good,  
moisturizer is my  
saving grace, and  
salmon is my  
favourite food

# A Day in the Life Of Your Skin

BY TERESA DUMAIN



☞ **THREE ALARM SNOOZES**, a leg scratch, and 14 eye rubs later, you roll out of bed and plod into the kitchen to make coffee. You're totally entitled to take it slow after a tough week, but I wish you'd rub me less. I'm thinnest around your eyes. At only about 0.05 mm thick—half the thickness of computer paper—I get tiny tears in capillaries from all that manhandling, making me look discoloured and older.

## My Favourite Shower Routine

Adequately caffeinated, you head to the bathroom to shower. As you wait for the water to warm, you give me a good scratch and then another. It happens more when the air is dry. The dry air sucks moisture out through my top layer, which makes me irritated. Literally.

Dryness triggers an inflammatory response: Immune cells as well as pro-inflammatory proteins and other enzymes go wild, activating itch receptors that send signals to your brain. The result: your fingernails raking across me (not so gently, I might add). I know it feels good for a second—scratching may engage pleasure and reward centres in the brain. But if you keep at it, I'll get even more inflamed, which will cause those itch receptors to refire. And a vicious circle continues.

As much as you want to linger under the soothing stream of water, I beg you to stop after ten minutes. Long, hot showers strip away my natural oils, as do soapy cleansers. A gentle, soap-free body wash will get rid of dirt but leave some oils to help me stay lubricated. I'm grateful that

you skipped washing your face this morning. Ladies, you don't need to wash your face twice a day (especially if you have dry skin). One cleansing at night gets rid of the debris that can clog my pores. Scrubbing again in the morning may remove too much oil.

After a quick pat-down, you dip into that new jar of moisturizing ointment and start slopping it on while I'm still damp. Ahhhh. Hello, happy place. This is exactly what I need—it's thick and petroleum-based and contains ceramides. These lipids occur naturally in my top layer, but I welcome an extra dose. They trap water molecules to help me stay smooth and dewy.

## I'm Tougher Than I Look

You're always doing things to "boost your immunity." If only you knew that I'm your first line of defence against germs! All three of my layers—my outer epidermis, thickest middle dermis, and bottom fatty layer—protect against invading bacteria, fungi, and other undesirables. That's also why I'm lucky you're so diligent about moisturizing. If my outer layer gets too dry, tiny cracks can develop,

which leaves me looking scaly—and you more prone to skin infections and inflammation.

But if I'm intact, I must say, I do my job well. Like right now. You decide to go shopping. I handily thwart the bugs you encounter on the commuter train: lurking on the handrails and ticket machines. I may feel soft, but don't be fooled. I'm as tough as nails. My epidermal cells create a dry, acidic environment that's hostile to bacteria. These cells also have a secret weapon: tentacle-like appendages that seek and destroy germs. And they secrete enzymes that help foil unwanted visitors.

When you bump into a table display, it's my innermost layer of fat and collagen cells that absorbs the shock and protects your inner organs, and it's my blood vessels that bear the brunt of the jolt. Hip-check the table hard enough, and it'll break the capillaries near my top layer, causing blood to leak into the surrounding tissue and form that unsightly mark.

As the hemoglobin in the blood—which gives the bruise its purplish colour—breaks down over time, the bruise turns Technicolor, fading to greenish yellow and then golden brown. Soon enough, I'll be back to normal as white blood cells finish repairing the damage.

## My Big Worry

I'm glad you layered a cotton T-shirt under your sweater; the wool is a

little abrasive. (It can even trigger a rash if I'm feeling particularly sensitive.) And thank goodness for your gloves. That sanitizing gel you squirted on after leaving the bookstore strips my natural oils. The gloves block any harsh outdoor air and help trap whatever moisture I have left.

But if I can complain for a sec, I don't understand why you skipped the sunscreen lotion this sunny morning. You moisturize anyway; it can't get any easier. Even applying a face powder with SPF would be better than nothing. Maybe you don't realize that as long as it's daylight, those ultraviolet rays are around, regardless of the weather. They penetrate deep into me and contribute to cancer and most of the problems you see in your skin: the wrinkles that make you cringe, the dark spots on your hands, and the saggy neck you hate in photos.

[Skin cancer is relatively rare among Indians, but some reports say its incidence is on the rise.]

## Feed Me Well

As you pass your favourite market on your way home, you stop in to shop for dinner tonight: fish and green leafy veggies. You know this choice is smart for your waistline, but it does me good as well. Oily fish is packed with omega-3s, which can help replenish my natural oils as well as fight inflammation; broccoli and the

For Healthy & Glowing Skin

# LET NATURE HEAL YOU

## Beautiful Skin

Beautiful Skin™ rejuvenates the skin, and improves complexion promoting a clear, healthy radiant glow & healthy skin. Beautiful Skin helps purify the blood and balances the endocrine system effectively treats skin infections and Skin allergy. These benefits are contributed by combined effect of time tested Ayurvedic herbs, Manjitha (*Rubia cordifolia*), Rakt Chandan (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), Rama Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) and Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*). Each one of these herbs has a history of independent use to nourish, protect and heal skin. When combined together, they provide unexcelled skin care.



## WWB (Womens Well Being)

Female sex hormone. Estrogene is the key to feminine beauty and over all feminine charm. This hormone improves all, whether it is skin, hair, voice or figure. WWB is the ideal formulation to keep estrogen level right, and to promote real feminine beauty there by. WWB contains all organic herbs, shatavari, Lodhra, Guruchi and Vanatulsii. It also takes care of various irregularities at different stages of a women's life.



## Tulsi Green Tea

A unique combination of Leaves of Three types of Tulsi and Green Tea. Both Tulsi and Green tea being rich in Anti oxidants can be detrimental in ensuring anti-ageing effects and metabolic regulation encouraging physical fitness. In addition Tulsi being a wonderful anti-stress/adaptogen and immunomodulator can help prevent and heal stress/stress induced ailments and infections, with a pleasant flavor.



## Brahmi

Organic Brahmi contributes immensely in making skin and hair glow, by improving blood supply to skin and scalp. It is a classical example of promoting Beauty and brain together, as it is a time tested brain tonic. In addition, Brahmi provides good mental relaxation and de-stresses both body and mind. As per Ayurveda, Brahmi helps provide long healthy hair, and also long and healthy life. Contains: Organic Brahmi (*Centella asiatica*)



## Amalaki

Organic Amalaki is the richest herbal source of vitamin C and other antioxidants. It provides glow to both skin and hair. It also heals acidity, improves digestion, elimination and detoxification, much required for healthy skin and hair. Its antioxidant property helps keep skin healthy. As per Ayurveda, Amalaki also improves eye sight, and helps fight old and cough effectively. Amalaki is a Rasayana which provides over all rejuvenation to body and mind. It contains organic Amalaki (*Embellica officinalis*).



green leafy vegetables have loads of vitamin C, which my cells require to make collagen, a protein that makes me firm and supple. And thanks for skipping dessert! Sugar molecules bind to my proteins, which compromises the fibres that keep me taut and prevent wrinkles.

## Trust Me, Beauty Sleep Is Real

You're turning in early tonight, which is exactly what I need to do my repair work. All day long, I've been making fresh new cells and pushing up dead ones to the top to be sloughed off. This renewal process speeds up

during deep sleep. In roughly a month, my top layer will be fully regenerated.

Now I just hope you sleep through the night. People who get uninterrupted, high-quality sleep show half as many signs of aging as poor sleepers. Good sleepers have fewer fine lines, better elasticity, and more even tone. I'll also recover more efficiently from stressors, and let's face it: I'll look more attractive.

I'm the first one to say that beauty is supposed to be more than skin-deep. But I also know that when I'm healthy, you feel beautiful—and that's worth all my efforts.



## SEE ME AFTER CLASS

*Why are students being punished these days? According to distractify.com, some rather unusual things:*

**Reason:** Volunteered to be a target for a paper plane. Was hit in the face with it.

**Reason:** Disrupting class by standing, unbuttoning his shirt to reveal a Superman T-shirt and announcing he was Superman.

**Reason:** Shaving his beard in class.

## FITTING THE BILL

*A new tool by the UK portal YouGov Profiles is revealing the tastes of Britons, if they just type in an interest to the profiler for interesting results:*

- Arsenal football fans like to read erotica.
- Fans of both Reader's Digest and Downton Abbey share a niche interest: "writing letters to the editor."

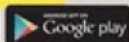
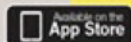
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BAZAAR  
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Where Fashion Gets Personal





# Home Pages That Boost Your Natural Genius

BY AMY-MAE ELLIOTT ADAPTED FROM MASHABLE.COM

IF YOU HAVEN'T customized your home page, you're missing a trick. You could start every day by learning something new, getting motivated by the creative arts, or enjoying an inspiring visual. Set your browser to load one of these sites whenever you create a new tab to get galvanized every time you go online.

## 1 SURPRISE ARTICLE FROM TODAY I FOUND OUT

If you're a fan of factoids, you can discover something new—like what happened to the flags left on the moon or read Gandhiji's letters to Hitler—every day of the week. ([todayifoundout.com](http://todayifoundout.com))

## 2 HISTORY.COM'S THIS DAY IN HISTORY

If you left your heart in high school

history class, this fascinating, comprehensive look at the day's date through the ages is for you. You'll peer into the past at notable events in wars, criminal trials, and natural disasters, as well as sports, music, literature, politics, and cinema. ([history.com/this-day-in-history](http://history.com/this-day-in-history))

## 3 POETS.ORG'S POEM-A-DAY

Ideal for anyone who wants to read more poetry but can't find the time, this will load an original, previously unpublished poem on weekdays and classic poems on weekends. ([poets.org/poetsorg/poem-day](http://poets.org/poetsorg/poem-day))

## 4 MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S WORD OF THE DAY

Language lovers, take your vocabulary to the next level and learn the

"10 HOMEPAGES THAT TEACH SOMETHING NEW EVERY TIME YOU OPEN A TAB" BY AMY-MAE ELLIOTT, ADAPTED FROM MASHABLE.COM.



meaning of words like *grubstake*, *tintinnabulation*, and *zaibatsu* by checking in with the dictionary's site every morning. ([merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day](http://merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day))

## 5 GOOGLE DOODLES

If you love Google's commemorative Doodles—such as a brilliantly animated battery for its inventor's 270th birthday and vibrant smacks of paint thrown on canvas in honour of the festival of Holi—you can visit the dedicated page to see what Google is celebrating each day. ([google.com/doodles](http://google.com/doodles))

## 6 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S PHOTO OF THE DAY

Give your eyeballs a treat every time you log on with good ol' *National Geographic's* Photo of the Day, which will show you anything from a snow monkey grooming its offspring to a strobe rocket at a fireworks convention.

([photography.nationalgeographic.com/photo-of-the-day](http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photo-of-the-day))

## 7 NASA'S ASTRONOMY PICTURE OF THE DAY

Stargaze from the comfort of your desk with a fresh astronomical image, complete with an explanation from a pro astronomer. ([apod.nasa.gov](http://apod.nasa.gov))

## AND ONE FOR THE ROAD

### Listen to any radio station!

One great thing about radio is you can listen while driving, cooking or maybe painting. And radio programs often have far more depth than those on TV. Digital radio also comes with no disturbance (as did short wave), and uses up far fewer bytes than videos. Use your PC or smart-phone to search for and listen to anything from BBC news and jazz music stations to... whatever. ([tunein.com](http://tunein.com))

—M.S. **R**

Making sense of today's trendiest diets

# Eat Smart

BY KATE FANE



THE DIET	THE GOOD	THE BAD	THE TAKE-AWAY
<b>JUICING</b> The new cold-pressed juicers crush produce into more nutrient-rich elixirs than their predecessors. Proponents claim juicing can boost the immune system and increase energy.	It's "an easy way to get a high dose of nutrients," says dietitian Lindsay Jang.	It can be expensive: eight carrots might only produce 250ml of juice. Extended all-juice cleanses can lack the fibre, protein and fats necessary for full nutrition.	Limit consumption and focus on homemade vegetable juice; fruit can spike blood sugar.
<b>PALEO</b> Taking a cue from our prehistoric ancestors, Paleo dieters eschew processed foods (including bread and cereals) for lean meats, nuts, seeds and produce.	Shauna Lindzon, a dietitian, says the low-sugar diet can help maintain insulin levels.	The plan prohibits grains, legumes and dairy, Lindzon notes, so "you miss out on nutrients like calcium and magnesium, which are essential for bone health."	Eat fresh, unprocessed foods whenever possible, but avoid eliminating entire food groups.
<b>ALKALINE</b> This latest diet craze separates food into alkaline- and acid-forming categories. Advocates insist high-acid items can disrupt pH balance and lead to osteoporosis and cancer.	The diet strongly recommends limiting our intake of processed, packaged and sugary foods.	"Our acid-base balance is regulated by the kidneys and lungs, not by the foods we eat," Lindzon explains. "The science is not behind this diet!"	Focus on produce, grains and seeds, but leave the pseudoscience out of it.

# Common Booking Mistakes

**✎** ERRORS CAN EASILY occur and often end up costing you the money you've saved by booking online. Are you making these four frequent blunders?

## NOT READING THE FINE PRINT

After surfing the web for hours to find that perfect holiday deal, reading the fine print is probably the last thing you want to do. However, it could be the difference between a stress-free holiday and a complete disaster.

## BOOKING THE WRONG DATES

Make sure to always have a calendar at hand when booking your flights and hotels. "If you're travelling between different time zones, make sure to double check your arrival date with the airline before booking your hotel stay," says Adam Schwab, CEO of [www.LuxuryEscapes.com](http://www.LuxuryEscapes.com)

## NOT CHECKING VALIDITY PERIODS, SURCHARGES AND BLACK-OUT PERIODS

In order to evade unexpected costs, it is important to pay special attention to double-check these things. "Pay

extra attention to validity periods, extra person surcharges, kids' policies, transfers costs as well as cancellation and amendment policy," says Schwab.

## WORKING SOLO

It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the dates and fine print so before you confirm your trip have your partner or friend read through all the travel details before booking and paying, suggests Schwab. Chances are, they'll notice anything you may have missed.





Sometimes overcoming what we dislike about our parents is a matter of just getting used to ourselves

## Becoming My Mother

BY SCAACHI KOUL

NO ELECTRIC MIXER was as strong as my mom's hands. Slipping her gold rings off with a clatter into a ceramic dish, she'd massage a mixture of flour, water and salt. Kneading the roti dough on the counter, she'd separate it into small orbs and flatten them into near-perfect triangles without a rolling pin. Then, with her short fingers and talon-like red nails,

she'd pinch at the rotis and flip them directly onto the stove's element.

"How do you do that?" I asked her, wincing at the heat hitting my eight-year-old face. "Doesn't it hurt?"

She laughed and tossed the smallest of the batch, a palm-sized paratha, onto a plate for me. The tips of her fingers were callused and numb after decades of touching



direct heat. “Oh, you get used to it.”

I have a photo of my mom close to my age, 24, posing for a portrait a few months before she left India nearly four decades ago. When I was younger, I hated this snapshot. Everyone would marvel at how much we looked alike: thick mess of dark hair, round nose, strong chin. I have my dad’s cheekbones, his smile, like a straight line drawn across his face, but I got everything else from my mom—whether I wanted it or not.

I grew up in Canada surrounded by girls named Ashley and Jessica, with hair the colour of straw, beak-like noses and delicate abdomens. I wanted to look breakable and flimsy, rather than broad-shouldered and coffee-coloured like my mother. You probably know this, but it took me a while to figure it out: it’s difficult to change literally everything about the way you look.

The older I get, though, the more I see her all over my body. And the more I like myself. The skin on my

shoulders feels like hers: as a child at the swimming pool, I’d climb onto my mother like a baby koala and rest my cheek on her cool, soft flesh. Our frown is the same, too—crumpled disgust settling right between our eyebrows. But most striking is how my hands are aging into hers. I’ve stolen countless of her rings, and I’ve started growing my nails out, long and circular, often painted red, glowing against my olive skin, just like hers have always been. The nerve endings in the tips of my fingers are dead from stove burns and from sticking my fingers directly into my attempts at *rogan josh* and *aloo gobi*.

My mom’s hair is grey now, and she has a small sunspot on her cheek (I’m getting one, too—thanks, Mom). But in my head, she’s stuck in her 20s, in that photo. The older I get, the more it’s an unexpected comfort to know that wherever I am, I see her with me, her hands wrapping over mine, making them our own. **R**



## FULL MARKS FOR INGENUITY

Real answers from exam papers, as seen at *distractify.com*:

**Q:** What do we call the science of classifying living things?

**A:** Racism.

**Q:** Where was the American Declaration of Independence signed?

**A:** At the bottom.

**Q:** What’s the strongest force on Earth?

**A:** Love.





# SEE

THE WORLD ...

Turn the page ➞







## ... DIFFERENTLY

Alexa Meade's models don't just serve as a reference for her paintings, they are also the canvas. In contrast to other body-painters, this 28-year-old American doesn't strive to make her subjects look photo-realistic. Quite the opposite: She renders 3-dimensional people and objects visually into 2-dimensional surfaces, thereby transforming the subjects themselves into living, temporary works of art.





# Little-Known *Secrets* From the *Supermarket*

BY SNIGDHA HASAN

**DO YOU SLIP** into the supermarket to pick up “just a few essentials” but leave with a cart full of stuff, a long bill, and the urge to get some rest? It’s no wonder—they know your weaknesses.

With thousands of products in those slick supermarkets, the retail sector is using more tricks than ever to get you to keep shopping only short of dropping, so you’d just be able to pay up and leave. “Whilst staples such as dairy, baked goods, and oils and fats account for the largest proportion of packaged food sales in India,” says an industry report, “the bulk of growth is set to come from impulse/indulgence products, like confectionery, ice

cream, and sweet and savoury snacks.”

In other words, things you can do without, things that may not be so good for your health or your wallet. But don’t blame yourself for being a spendthrift—there’s a lot at play here, from the moment you enter a supermarket till you leave. So we asked a mix of salesmen, store owners, managers, retail-industry experts and some of our own Digest-editor shoppers to share their insider strategies and knowledge to save you money, stay healthy, and beat supermarkets at their own game. Here are 38 nuggets of supermarket wisdom you may not have known or thought about: ➡

JON FEINGERSH/GETTY IMAGES

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY MICHELLE CROUCH

## THE STANDARD TRICKS

**1** The business model of supermarkets depends on impulse purchases. Products like chocolates, candies, razor blades, batteries, etc, are stocked at check-out tills and, more often than not, trigger impulse buys. A well laid-out, well-stocked store with the right product adjacencies and effective visual merchandising is key to higher impulse purchases.

**R. SRIRAM,**  
*cofounder, Next Practice Retail,*  
*a consultancy in Bengaluru and Mumbai*

**2** Supply of fresh produce is fragmented, and handling them is more difficult and more expensive for supermarkets. On the other hand,

processed, packaged food items are more easily managed from the business point of view. So supermarket shelves have a disproportionate representation of processed foods.

**DEVANGSHU DUTTA,** *chief executive,*  
*Third Eyesight, a consultancy for*  
*consumer goods and retail*

**3** We're very aware of the role that the senses play in marketing. When you walk in the door, you smell bread baking or rotisserie chicken roasting because we know those smells get your salivary glands working. When you're salivating, you're a much less disciplined shopper.

**PACO UNDERHILL,** *consumer expert and*  
*author of "What Women Want:*  
*The Science of Female Shopping"*

**4** It's no accident that shopping carts are getting bigger. We doubled their size as a test, and customers bought 19 percent more.

**MARTIN LINDSTROM,** *marketing*  
*consultant and author of*  
*"Brandwashed: Tricks Companies*  
*Use to Manipulate Our*  
*Minds and Persuade Us to Buy"*

**5** When a supermarket promotes discounts on certain products or brands, you may go there only to purchase those items, but undiscounted products may often be placed strategically next to them.

**ALEX LEFTWICH,** *CEO,*  
*Retail Management Consultants, UK*



**6** Supermarkets keep products like chocolates, candies and stationery on low shelves at kids-eye level so your children may see them and exploit their pester power.

**PRITEE SHAH**, *chief general manager, Consumer Education and Research Society, Ahmedabad*

**7** Supermarkets adapt their store format to local customers. While a large, well laid-out store with wide aisles may be appropriate in one location, in another place customers may connect better with a feel of “organized chaos” that may seem closer to the traditional open market environment.

**DEVANGSHU DUTTA**

**8** Some supermarkets now consider *Vaastu shastra* principles to design their layouts. For instance, certain directions are recommended for a store’s warehouse. Keeping the cash registers towards the north-east is believed to keep them ringing.

**KRISHANK MALIK**,  
*Mumbai-based Vaastu consultant*

**9** Grocery e-tailing [selling grocery online] is challenging, but it also has the advantage of a high percentage of repeat orders. All you need to do is impress a customer with the first order. Once a customer is satisfied, you can have one more regular in your clientele.

**PRITAM P. HANS** in “Virtual Grocer,”  
*an article in Money Today magazine*

**10** The ease of online access to an unlimited array of products available at your fingertips, if not used sensibly, can encourage overspending or create more shopaholics.

**MANU MANMADHAN**,  
*Bengaluru-based owner of Wonder Years, a kids’ accessories and stationery retail, and a former category manager with the Future Group*

**11** All uniformed salespersons in a supermarket need not be the store’s employees. Some could be from a particular company. So, if I see them promoting one brand over all the others, I straightaway ask who they work for.

*A female shopper*

**12** Seek and you shall find. The loaves of bread I could see on the supermarket bakery shelves were all made the previous day. It smelled of baking, and surely, they would have baked some today, I thought, and kept searching. I found today’s loaves hidden in a row behind yesterday’s.

*Bread-loving male shopper*

## WE WANT YOU TO KNOW

**13** Supermarkets negotiate better discounts and offers from brands because of the economies of scale they command as compared with smaller grocery stores. Yet they face stiff competition from those small competitors. These grocery stores offer consumers personalized service, home

deliveries and sometimes credit; supermarkets offer convenience, price incentives and product variety.

**PANKAJ GUPTA,**

*senior practice head, Consumer & Retail, Tata Strategic Management Group*

**14** Supermarkets aren't out to steal from you. The average supermarket has pitifully low profit margins. To give you some idea of how low it is, the margin for clothing stores can be several times that.

**PHIL LEMPERT,** *grocery industry expert and editor of supermarketguru.com*

**15** Even so, innumerable customers are out to steal from supermarkets. In our jargon, we call those losses "shrinkage," because they tend to shrink our businesses. Though supermarkets came late here, India had the world's highest rate of shrinkage for five years in a row till 2011. Shocked? Actually, our own dishonest employees also contribute to a small part of that.

*Adapted from "They're Stealing You Blind," Reader's Digest, April 2013*

**16** Due to the huge rush on weekends, customers were spending close to an hour in billing queues after they shopped in much less time. Many would eventually abandon their shopping carts and leave, and that wasn't helping the store or the customers. To reduce the weekend peak demand, some stores created a mid-week prop-

osition—with good offers and discounts—for those who were willing to change their shopping day.

**PANKAJ GUPTA**

**17** Products from our deli section which can't be sold till the end of the day, but are fit for consumption, are first offered to the store staff at cheaper rates and then sent to an NGO.

*Service associate at a Mumbai supermarket*

**18** Storefronts are the primary billboards of supermarkets as they don't have the big budgets to keep on advertising.

**R. SRIRAM**

## GOOD DEAL OR NOT?

**19** People like to purchase their monthly supply of groceries after payday, the first ten days of the month. Hence most good deals and offers are available during this period and don't get revived until the first of the next month.

**HARISH SOMANI,** *Proprietor, Magniram Murlidhar Supermarket, Ujjain, MP*

**20** In a supermarket, a good sale is anything that's half price. "Buy one, get the second one 50 percent off" discounts are not good sales—that's only 25 percent off each. Almost everything is reduced to 50 percent at some point.

**TERI GAULT,** *grocery savings expert and CEO of thegrocerygame.com*



**21** A marked-down product may be close to its expiry date—something you can easily check on the packaging. Buy it only if you are sure it will be consumed in time.

ALEX LEFTWICH

**22** Discount codes from sites like *couponDunia.in* and price comparison plug-ins to your browser, like PriceTree, can help you save money on almost every online purchase you make. The online retailer's aim is to make you use these coupon codes even to buy, impulsively, things you don't need.

MANU MANMADHAN

**23** Do not assume that if something is displayed at the end of an aisle, it is a good deal. Often, it's not. Those "endcaps" are sold specifically to companies trying to promote a product.

PACO UNDERHILL

**24** Not all imported products burn a hole in your pocket. I've been buying Anti Bac Plus, a Vietnamese-made washing machine detergent from a big supermarket near my home in Mumbai. The 2.5-kilo Anti Bac Plus (also Active Plus, another version) pack has an MRP of ₹399 but is always marked down to ₹299. It's just as

good as top Indian brands that cost a lot more. And it's made for all—front-and toploading—machines.

*A regular shopper*

**25** Successful retailers know that shoppers often aren't looking for the cheapest products, but want value for money.

R. SRIRAM

**26** Be mindful when buying larger sizes [of soft drinks, cheese, biscuits, etc] to make sure your habits don't change as a result.

JEFF WEIDAUER, *former supermarket executive and vice president of marketing for Vestcom, a retail services company*

## MARKET MANNERS, ETC

**27** Be kind to supermarket staff. I have seen customers berating or yelling at our employees when something isn't right. These young boys and girls are often from low-income families and making a living by working very hard. They've been



told not to answer back or react to your unkindness, so you are only revealing your bad breeding and arrogance when you are unkind to them. Your rude behaviour can also create fear and negativity in the minds of these young staff, who may end up trying to avoid customer contact till they feel better—inconveniencing other customers. **MANU MANMADHAN**

**28** When I'm in a long queue for weighing fruits and vegetables, there are sometimes customers who come and park their carts next to me instead of behind me. I know that he or she is up to no good, so after a while I smile and ask, "Are you behind me or ahead of me?" If they say "Ahead," I know they're lying, but I just say "After you," and step back. It hasn't cost me anything.

*Regular male Saturday shopper*

**29** At the supermarket I go to, chocolates used to be stocked along with other snacks until recently. There's a new section now, which requires customers to get chocolates billed and seal-packed separately soon after they are picked up. No wonder—I've seen children eat a chocolate bar and toss the wrapper away before reaching the billing counter. Teach your offspring to be honest. *A female shopper*

**30** When they're in season, I see people freely tasting grapes

from the heap. Shop assistants don't mind. That's when I wonder what they'd say if I bit off and sampled an alphonso in the mango season.

*A fruit shopper*

## GET MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

**31** There are essentially two kinds of customers: those who use time to save money and those who use money to save time. Supermarkets cater to both. You could belong to either category at different times. Be on your guard when you are in a rush.

**ALEX LEFTWICH**

**32** Yes, a supermarket reminds me of duty-free, customs and



immigration, but without the flying. When I just want to buy a few things, I prefer paying more for those things at the corner store, and flying out.

*Senior citizen shopper*

**33** Most unscheduled purchases take place when there's no shopping list. Make a list and stick to it.

**ALEX LEFTWICH**

**34** Food and grocery shopping at supermarkets is likely to overshoot the budget when you take the kids with you.

**DEVANGSHU DUTTA**

**35** Keep your receipt, which shows the item and the price you last paid, so you can tell when something is cheaper now. That's when you should stock up.

**PHIL LEMPERT**

**36** Products manufactured or produced in-house, often with our own brand-name, are usually cheaper than big brands and of a good quality. You can give these a try and then buy a mix so you don't compromise on quality and yet save money.

**HARISH SOMANI**

**37** The mist that's sprayed on your fruits and veggies may make them look fresh, but it can make them rot faster. The water also adds to an item's weight, so make sure you shake off leafy greens.

**MARTIN LINDSTROM**

**38** I tend to buy more vegetables than we need from the supermarket. So there's a lot of wastage. Forgotten at the bottom of the fridge, they often get old and bad. This did not happen in our home before supermarkets arrived.

*A male shopper*



## PRESIDENTIAL QUIPPING

Bons mots from American comedians-in-chief "If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?"

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

"Nothing was ever done so systematically as nothing is being done now."

**WOODROW WILSON**

"I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of a national emergency—even if I'm in a Cabinet meeting."

**RONALD REAGAN**

"Being president is like running a cemetery: you've got a lot of people under you and nobody's listening."

**BILL CLINTON**

A stray came into our lives and  
lived up to it—becoming our best friend

# Kafu's Lesson

BY ADITYA SHARMA

**ON A COOL** November day 18 years ago, I noticed a big black dog rolling with abandon on the young wheat at our farm in Panipat, Haryana. I was furious. For the last few days, I had been shooing him away but he kept turning up.

I went to my father and told him how the dog had destroyed a chunk of our crop. "It's all your doing," I said. "Why did you offer milk to him a few days ago?"

"He looked hungry," my father replied. "No harm in feeding a stray."

"No harm. But he wants us to adopt him now."

"Why not?" asked Father.

"We already have Jhabroo. He won't allow another dog to enter this place."

Having lived with several strays my

father kept bringing home, I had come to like dogs. But the sight of this fully-grown mean-looking creature filled me with misgivings.

Our joint-family partition had forced us to leave our comfortable flat in a neighbouring city and adjust to the rough and tumble of a farmhouse life. We had no immediate neighbours. Monkeys and rats were a big nuisance. Snakes often shocked us by appearing from nowhere!

A second-year LLB student then, I attended lectures at Delhi University's law faculty on weekdays. In my absence the black dog got along with Father so well that one Saturday I saw him sleeping beside his bed. Before I could drive him away, Father asked me to let him be. "He is rather intelli-

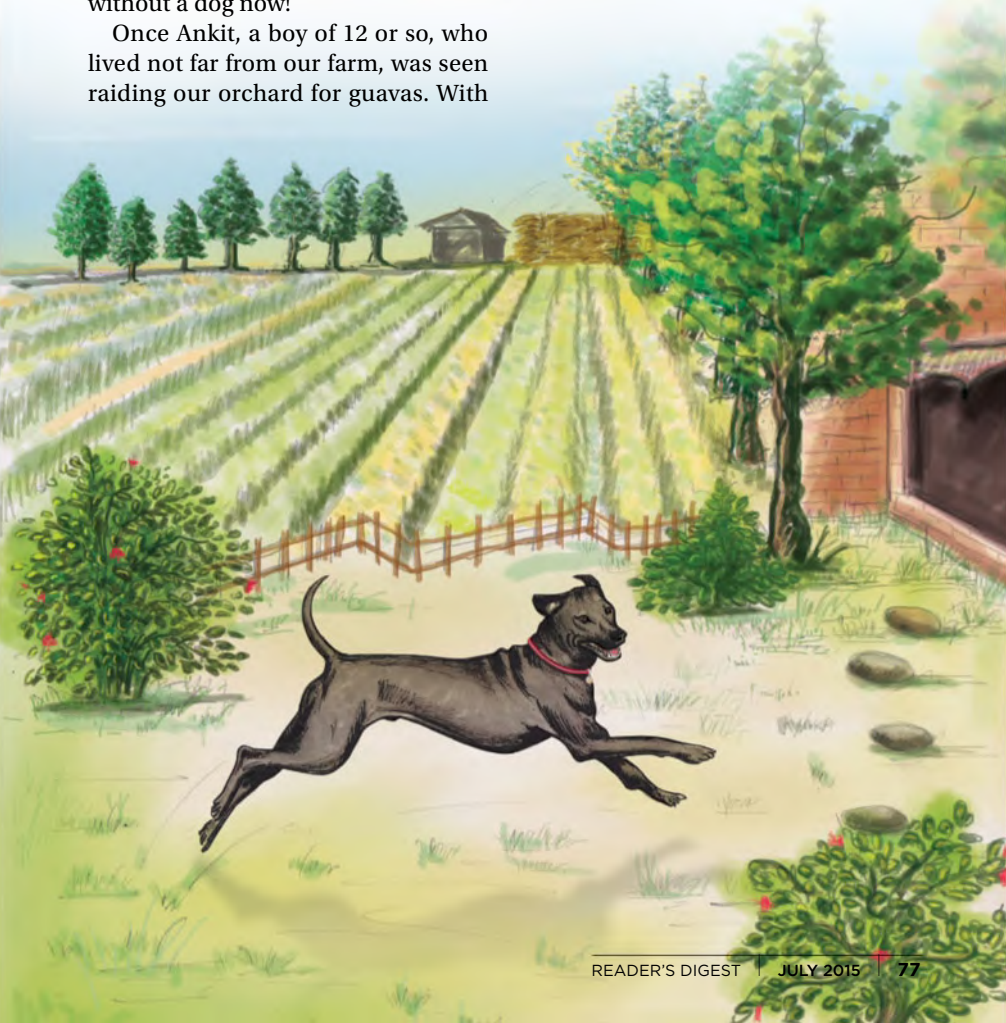
gent—and very friendly too.”

Realizing that his angry barks hardly affected the black dog, a frustrated Jhabroo too made peace with him. A few days later, however, poor Jhabroo was hit by a bus and died outside our house. “Had I listened to you,” my father said, “we would have been without a dog now!”

Once Ankit, a boy of 12 or so, who lived not far from our farm, was seen raiding our orchard for guavas. With

the black dog in tow, I quietly walked up to him and hollered, “Get down from the tree!”

I was surprised to notice that instead of barking, the dog started wagging its tail at the boy! “It’s my dog,” exclaimed Ankit jumping down. Deflecting my attention from the stolen guavas, he





patted the dog fondly and added, "I took him home when he was a little puppy. But when my mother found out that I was playing with him all the time instead of studying, she insisted on throwing him out."

I also discovered that the dog had been christened "Kalu" and he had been living on the streets ever since.

Kalu didn't take long to prove himself useful. Thanks to him, the number of rats in the house started dwindling. Whenever he spotted a rat, he left everything aside—even his food—and dashed after it, least bothered about toppling a few things around.

The farmhouse was his territory now. If strangers entered the gates, he would chase them out. Even monkeys stopped entering our compound while he was around. One night, as I was walking towards our tubewell to water the fields, Kalu suddenly started clawing the ground and growling in a state of urgency. When I shone my torch in front of me, I was shocked to see a snake, just a few metres ahead. Sensing trouble, the reptile disappeared into a bush. Had I continued walking I might have stepped upon it.

At night when we slept, Kalu barked at the slightest noise like an alert guard patrolling the house. We had often



*The author's father with Kalu at the farm.*

heard about thieves decamping with valuables in the vicinity but his presence was quite reassuring. One night at about 1am, we were woken up by Kalu's furious growls. "Could it be thieves?" my father whispered to me.

We dashed for two *lathis* and my father shouted through a window, "Who's there?" No reply. Kalu's growls grew more ferocious. Suddenly we heard a man wail, "*Bachao!*"

"It could be a trick to get us out," my father said.

Before we could decide what to do, the man cried out again, "Save me from this beast!" It wasn't the man's words but the pitiable tone in which he had uttered them that made us realize he was being mauled by Kalu.

Armed with lathis we went outside, and saw under the moonlight that an enraged Kalu had pinned the man down on the ground. To protect him-

self from those sharp teeth, the man was rolling around desperately and crying out. Seeing Father, the man begged, “Save me, sahib!”

There was soil on the man’s face, most of his clothing had been reduced to shreds and blood oozed from his legs and hands. With Father’s help, I managed to drag Kalu away. The man sat on the ground making no attempt to escape. “What made you come here?” Father questioned him.

“Sahib, I forgot my way,” the man answered avoiding my father’s gaze.

“Don’t come here again,” Father ordered, waving his lathi. “Next time, you’ll get this.”

The man hauled himself up and disappeared into the darkness. As Kalu continued barking after the man, I saw Mother gazing fondly at him through the window. Kalu’s stock rose further in the family.

Having tasted absolute freedom on the streets, Kalu didn’t like being chained. His muzzle pointed skyward, he would howl till we set him free. It became worse during the mating season. Set free, he’d disappear for days, although we would sometimes catch a glimpse of him romping with a ladylove.

Then one day, Kalu shocked us all by bringing along a reddish-brown female. His tail waving, he went up to Father and licked his hand as if requesting him to accept the bride. My happy father lost no time in getting another collar and chain from the

market. “We’ll call her Laali,” he said pouring milk for her in Kalu’s saucer. A few months later we were staring at a litter of five puppies! To our surprise, Kalu proved to be such a caring father that he dug a deep pit in the farm for the pups. Although we fed them regularly, he often got chappatis and chicken bones specially for his brood from a neighbouring restaurant. That a dog could feel so responsible towards his offspring was a revelation indeed.

Kalu lived with us faithfully for over seven years. When he went missing for three days we weren’t surprised—he was known to spend time with old buddies from his stray days. But when our maid informed us that she had seen Kalu’s body, we were shocked. When we rushed to the spot, we discovered that a tea-seller, who ran his small shop in a lane behind our farm, had buried him. “Looks like he ate something poisonous,” he suggested. Our farm seemed desolate without Kalu and it took us a while to get over the void he left. As for Laali, she too died two years later and her pups had been adopted by various friends of ours.

Over the years, we took in several more dogs, including a Labrador and a Doberman, but none of them could match Kalu’s understanding and high spirits. The mean-looking stray I didn’t want taught me to never judge anyone by his looks—be it man or his best friend.

**R**

If you have a heart, you can help anybody

# TOURIST TRAIL

**GOING HOME** to Kashipur, Uttarakhand, I had my elderly mother as pillion passenger on my Yamaha motorbike. We had just started downhill from a spot near Lake Bhimtal. The winding road was being re-laid on one side, and the previous night's showers had made negotiating the bends somewhat arduous.

On the way up, the sturdy Yamaha engine had made the climb without a fuss. However, bikers had always warned that the downward journey was invariably tricky. Now, with Mom, I had to be extra cautious, avoiding potholes and heaps of gravel. The only comfort was the thinned out traffic, with the summer rush to Nainital and other tourist areas already over.

I must have covered about half of the 26-km hilly stretch to Haldwani in a gingerly manner when I noticed a Tata Safari trailing me, too close for comfort. I slowed down further to let it pass. However, the man behind the wheel gestured to me to continue.

I grew a little edgy as unpleasant thoughts of travellers being robbed on lonely roads crossed my mind.

A momentary lapse in concentration made me lose my balance at a hairpin bend. I swerved, trying to avoid a heavily loaded truck on its way up. The Yamaha toppled to one side, and both of us fell with it. Immediately, the Tata Safari stopped and two people from it rushed towards us. As I struggled to straighten the bike, my mother also got up, a little bruised and dazed.

"This is why I stayed behind you," Suraj Arora, the tourist from Delhi driving the Safari explained, "I was afraid something like this might happen, considering the difficulty you'd been having riding down."

It was solely to watch over us that he had not sped past. "Let your mother sit with us for the rest of the hill journey," Arora urged. Not very sure, I glanced at the other occupants of the Tata Safari. Understanding my





## DHABA HOSPITALITY

One morning I got off the Shalimar Express at Jammu and walked to the nearby bus station. I had promised my commanding officer, that I'd come in as early as possible that day, so I had to eat and then take a bus to our Air Force unit in Srinagar about 300km away. But then I realized my wallet had been picked!

Pawning my silver ring, a gift from a loved one, looked like the only way out. Just then I saw a small restaurant, unusually clean for a *dhaba*. Seated at the counter was a middle-aged man, its owner. I explained my problem to him. He took the ring and gave me ₹25—which was not enough even for my bus fare. I took the money anyway and left for the nearby military transit camp, from where I would get a free ride, but I'd reach my unit only in three days instead of one.

I had walked for a minute when a young boy from the *dhaba* came running after me. "Papa is calling you," he said. So I went back. The owner, Ram Narayan, fed me breakfast, gave me another ₹50 and a packed lunch. He also returned my ring, which left me fumbling for words. He'd obviously had a change of heart. I repaid the money on my next visit there. That was in 1982.

Since then I have been posted in various places but was transferred back to Srinagar in 1990. I visited Narayan again and he fed me very well as usual, but I insisted on paying for the meal. His son, all grown up now, was still helping him run the *dhaba*.


"Would you like to work in the Air Force?" I asked the young man. I told him how to apply and, months later, he got a permanent job as a Class IV employee in the IAF. All I did was provide a little information, which was nothing compared to what he'd done for me when I was penniless and upset.

**ANIL GANDHI, Meerut**

suspicious, he called out to his wife and children to help get my mother into their vehicle. She limped in. Arora insisted on tailing me again, but this time I was relaxed.

Finally, my bike and the Safari gradually made it down the hills. At Haldwani, I asked my mother to sit pillion again and Suraj Arora and his family went their way wishing us goodbye

and a safe journey. Uttarakhand is my home state, but eight years later, I have not forgotten that Delhi family who took care of my mother and me.

**VIJAI PANT, Kashipur** 

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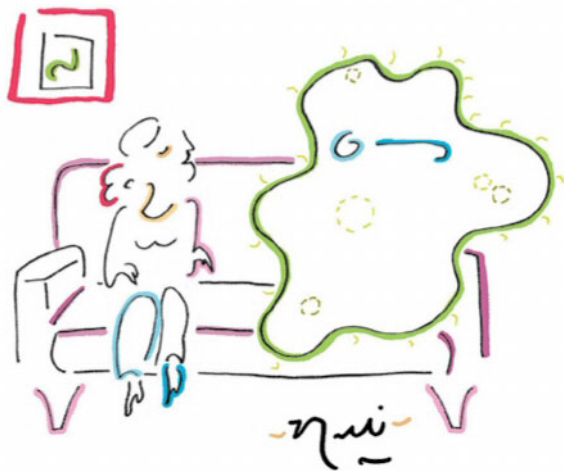
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# As Kids See It



*"And that's why we named you Amorphous."*

**MY WIFE'S SISTER'S** five-year-old granddaughter Shreya was playful and chirpy when I visited her family. I once told Shreya that I loved her. "How can that be?" she asked. "You are already married."

RAVI SEHGAL, *New Delhi*

**ONE MORNING**, while I was getting ready, my two-year-old was smelling my perfumes. After I asked her many times to put the bottles away, she responded, "But Mom, my nose is thirsty."

LAURA ZANDBERG

**MY THREE-YEAR-OLD** son was playing hide-and-seek with his

father. He turned to the dog and said, "Dixie, hide!" When the dog didn't obey, he complained, "Dixie won't hide!" His father explained that the dog didn't understand—that hiding was too complicated.

My son turned to the dog and said, "Okay. Dixie, you count!"

LAURA CROFT

**AS A CHILD** I was intrigued by 'To let' signs outside houses in our town. The spelling didn't matter but I wondered why so many people would declare publicly that they had a toilet in their homes.

SNIGDHA HASAN, *Mumbai*





# INTO THE MUD

The landslide had swallowed  
his neighbourhood, and  
Kris Langton's family was in there

BY ANITA BARTHOLOMEW

**ALL THROUGH LAST MARCH**, the tiny hamlet of Oso in Washington State, USA, soaked in twice the usual rainfall. Winter and spring were always soggy in the verdant Stillaguamish River valley at the western edge of the Cascade Mountain Range. But this time the clouds outdid themselves. ➔



So, when the sun at last rose into a bright blue sky on Saturday, 22 March 2014, LoAnna and Kris Langton's three older kids happily ran outside to play with friends who'd been at their house on C-Post Road, near Highway 530, for a sleep-over. Inside, LoAnna, 30, nursed their youngest, Kristian, four months old, while her own mom and her great aunt sat together on the couch.

Then, above the laughter of the children, LoAnna heard a new sound—like the roar of a jumbo jet. The lights began to flicker. Leaving the baby with her mom, LoAnna rushed outside and searched the sky. Nothing. The rumble was coming from behind the house. She turned to see the earth rise up on the 183-metre-high, tree-covered hill in the distance. Then it fell again, as if a monstrous bulldozer were pushing from behind. As she watched, an 800-metre-wide tsunami of churning mud, sand and debris came thundering down the hill towards them, knocking over hundreds of towering conifers like so many toothpicks.

The children screamed in terror. LoAnna gathered everyone into the bedroom farthest from the falling hillside. There, she huddled with her loved ones and waited to die.

**TALL, RUGGED**, red-bearded Kris Langton and his father-in-law had left earlier that morning to haul a load of trash to the Arlington dump to the west. They were waiting to unload the

pickup when the 31-year-old carpenter got a hysterical call from his wife, LoAnna. The mountain had fallen, she cried. Houses had been swept away. People were screaming for help. He got the gist: Landslide.

The men sped back towards Highway 530 and home.

**QUINN NATIONS, 33**, shook his head at the derelict farm truck his buddy, Isaac Hall, had just bought. But the burly logger obliged when Hall asked for his help getting it home to Darrington, east of Oso. As Hall towed it behind his other truck, Nations steered the heap along Highway 530. Pretty soon, Nations heard sirens behind them. A state patrol car whizzed by. More sirens sounded in the distance. Something big had to be happening.

**TRAFFIC ON 530** had come to a dead halt. Langton left his father-in-law in the truck and began jogging along the road. When people asked what was going on, he shouted, "Mudslide," and kept going.

State patrol officers were cutting power. Up beyond the emergency vehicles, the highway and everything on both sides of it were covered with a thick, wet, grey stew of sand, clay, snapped trees and chunks of what used to be homes. A roof sat in the middle of where the road had been.

Langton's family was on the other side. He waded in.

Officers who understood the risks of venturing beyond the perimeter they guarded shouted for him to stop. No one could yet say how deep the mud might be. More of the hill could fall at any moment. And with the slide debris blocking its natural flow, the river was rising.

"If you want to stop me, you'll have to use a stun gun," Langton hollered, and kept going. Almost immediately, the mud came up to his knees.

Shimmying across a fallen tree, he chose his next steps carefully, over logs, pieces of dry-wall and unrecognizable detritus. It was slow going. He heard a woman scream for help. As he followed the sound through mud now waist high, air bubbles popped in the muck. Small water geysers danced six inches off the surface. The river was rising under the mud.

Soon he had to belly crawl over the shattered remnants of houses to reach the source of the cries, about 91 metres from the road. From the massive pile of debris, "it looked like the house had just rolled," says Langton.

At first, all he could see was an arm, reaching up through the ruins. He pulled away some smaller branches and a sofa cushion and there she was, a young, dark-haired woman, buried under pieces of walls, furniture, and

trees. Her head was bloody and gashed. One eye socket was damaged. A huge laceration stretched across one arm.

And she was holding a whimpering baby.

**QUINN NATIONS** and Isaac Hall were waiting for the traffic to clear on Highway 530 when a fellow logger, Kody Wesson, ran up and told them about the landslide. "There are people out there screaming for help!"

Rushing to where officers had cordoned off the highway, the men were threatened with arrest if they tried to pass. Then Nations heard a baby's cry. "We're going in," he said. Several more people left their vehicles and followed

them. The mud was now chest-high.

**LANGTON YANKED AND CLAWED** at the debris that had the woman trapped. Her name was Amanda, she said, and the baby's name was Duke. He was five months old. And he wasn't looking good.

Amanda said she couldn't feel her legs—another bad sign. Langton kept her engaged in talk while pulling away the wood, metal and furniture springs trapping mother and child.

At last, he was able to pull out baby Duke. By this time, Kody Wesson had made it to the site. Pulling off his

“There are people out there screaming for help. We’re going in!”

sweatshirt, Langton turned it inside out and wrapped the baby inside. He handed Duke to Wesson and went back to digging out Amanda.

Right behind Wesson, Nations and several others tossed down planks, logs, boards, parts of walls and roofs—anything they could find to help make a bridge to carry out the victims to waiting ambulances.

Wesson walked a few metres towards Nations and sank almost to his neck, holding Duke above his head. “I grabbed the baby from him,” says Nations, “and gave him to the next guy behind me.” The tiny child had gone limp. Seconds mattered now. Duke got passed along until a paramedic took him. The child had stopped breathing, but a few quick CPR compressions brought a hearty cry. A helicopter whisked the baby away.

About 70 metres away, Isaac Hall spied a small boy buried up to his waist and went to dig him out.

With baby Duke on his way to safety, “I went on in to help the momma,” says Nations.

With the logger now taking the lead on freeing Amanda, and others helping, it was time for Langton to go. He was still 1.6km from C-Post Road. He had to find his own family.

**ONE OF THE FIREFIGHTERS** had carried a chainsaw into the mud from his rig. Now Nations had something to work with. He spent his days, power

*The hillside appeared solid but it was mostly sand and gravel. When rains saturated the hill last March, the soft sediment could no longer hold the wall face together. In less than two minutes, mud buried approximately 2.6 square kilometres around Oso to depths of up to 5.5 metres.*



saw in hand, climbing up trees, sawing off limbs so the guys below could pull the trunk down.

He told Amanda to be brave—he was going to be cutting very close to her body. The stoic young mother covered her face and said, “Go for it.”

For the next fifteen minutes, Nations sawed away as much debris as possible. He could see that Amanda’s legs were broken.

Nations laid aside the saw. Her feet were still stuck, but he couldn’t risk sawing any further down. He and two other rescuers, a firefighter and a civilian, agreed they had to yank her out. “Ma’am, this is going to hurt,” said the civilian and Amanda nodded her consent. The two other men grabbed her under her shoulders while Nations reached down as far as he could into the debris and grabbed her legs close to her ankles. They all pulled at once. She cried out in agony—but she was free.

The three men carried Amanda out to where rescuers from the helicopter hovering above could bundle her into a basket. A member of the rescue team then descended in a sling, and Isaac



Hall handed up little Jacob Spillers, four years old, then climbed aboard behind him.

**WADING AGAIN THROUGH** a landscape turned upside down and inside out, Langton saw that up ahead, two houses had collided. One was now just half a house, lying on its side. He heard a moan coming from the ruins.

Right then, he felt it with a certainty: LoAnna was all right. She'd called him after the hillside fell, so she hadn't been trapped in the slide. Whoever was moaning needed him more. He went to help.

"I took two steps and jumped and just sank into clay, up to my shoulder blades," recalls Langton.

His arms and legs immobilized, he

was sure this was the end. Then he realized that by wiggling his torso, he could get some forward momentum and slowly managed to shimmy his way out far enough out of the mud and continue towards the ruins.

Inside the rubble he found an older man buried in house debris and tree limbs. He was at least twice Langton's weight and he'd probably been in the shower; he had not a stitch on him. Alert and precise, the man told him his name was Tim Ward.

Ward was solidly wedged. He'd have to wait for more help. Meanwhile, Langton asked if anyone else had been in the house. Yes, Ward told Langton—his wife. Langton went looking for her, calling her name. What he heard in reply was the moan, not of a woman,



*The tall, bearded Kris Langton helped save four people before making it home to find that his family had found safety.*



but of another man, coming from the remnants of the second house.

Following the sound to its source, he pulled away a microwave, shattered walls and spare tyres, but the man was buried too deeply for Langton to see him.

Hearing helicopter rotors above, Langton climbed up on the roof, met a member of the search and rescue team and led him to Ward. Then he headed back to work on freeing the second man. Soon Langton could see he was buried facedown inside a couch. He uncovered a thigh, a foot. He kept digging.

"I get the back of the head. I get an arm," recalls Langton. The man said his name was Larry.

Langton was finally able to turn

Larry over to face him. "And at that second, I see him, his face is covered with dishrags soaked with blood. The backs of his hands are peeled back."

Once Tim Ward was in the helicopter, the crew came to free Larry. It was time for Langton to go find his family.

**HOURS LATER**, Langton finally reached home. The mud had stopped just shy of their house. His truck was gone and all his work tools had been pulled out—to make room for the nine people who had been at the house, Langton realized. LoAnna had got everyone out.

He changed his clothes, checked cars and houses nearby for survivors, then walked back towards Highway 530 through rising water, hitching a ride to search-and-rescue's ad hoc



command centre outside Darrington.

LoAnna had driven everyone to the home of one of the children who'd been with her kids. An officer called to tell her, we've found your husband. Meet him at the command centre.

The big carpenter's heart swelled as he saw the car coming down the road. LoAnna pulled over, leapt out, and ran to him. He folded her into his arms and hugged her close for what seemed a long, long time. Softly, he spoke. "Let's go home, LoAnna. I've seen too much. Take me home."

*The Stillaguamish River flooded the Langtons' house with more than a*

*metre of water. They now live in Arlington, about 20km west of Oso.*

*Just nine survivors were pulled from the mud, all of them on that day. Langton, Nations, Wesson, Hall and the other civilians who disregarded orders from officials are probably the only reason that five of them are still alive.*

*Over the next several weeks, Nations took charge of the grim task of finding the bodies of the 43 people who lost their lives. The last victim, 44-year-old Kris Regelbrugge, was pulled from the debris on 22nd July, four months after the devastating landslide.*

**R**



## HOW THE DISHONEST HANDLE MEETINGS!

**Translate percentages into fractions.** If someone says "25% of people clicked on this button," quickly chime in with, "So about one in four," and make a note. Everyone will nod in agreement, secretly impressed.

**Nod continuously while pretending to take notes.** Always bring a notepad with you. Take notes by writing down one word from every sentence you hear and of course, nod.

**Ask the presenter to go back a slide.** Do this at any point in the presentation and you'll look like you're paying closer attention than everyone else.

**Encourage everyone to "take a step back."** There comes a point in most meetings where everyone is chiming in, except you. This is a great point to say, "Guys, guys, can we take a step back here?" Followed by a quick, "What problem are we trying to solve?" You've just bought yourself another hour of looking clever.

*As seen at [sadanduseless.com](http://sadanduseless.com)*

Ever-more-mammoth container ships ply  
the oceans between Asia and Europe,  
bringing everything we want **BY ROBERT KIENER**

# COLO

A large blue Maersk container ship is being lifted by a red crane at a shipyard. The ship's hull is a vibrant blue, and the red crane structure is prominent in the background. The ship is suspended by several thick cables. The background shows a clear blue sky and other industrial structures of the shipyard.

*The Maersk McKinney-Moller,  
one of the new EEE-class ships.*

# SSUS OF THE SEAS

**I**T'S JUST after four in the morning and I'm in an 18-metre pilot boat, the tender *Aquila*, that's ploughing through half-metre waves some 20 kilometres off the southwest coast of Holland. A light fog shrouds the North Sea and a mild rain falls. The *Aquila's* captain turns to me and points to a glowing green dot on the radar screen in front of him. "She's dead ahead," he shouts over the noise of the engine and the rain splattering off the boat's windshield.

In just a few minutes I will board the EEE-class *Marie Maersk*, one of the world's largest container ships, with locally based pilot Sytze Kijlstra, who will help guide the giant vessel into the port of Rotterdam. Kijlstra tells me to follow him as he steps out of the boat's cozy cabin, a waterproof laptop computer and portable navigation system tucked beneath his right arm.

As we stand on the deck of the *Aquila*, the *Marie Maersk* emerges from the fog. I'm stunned. Nothing has prepared me for the sheer bulk of the massive \$185 million, year-old container ship. It's bigger than an aircraft carrier. It is 440 metres long and as high as a 20-storey building.

Everything about the ship is outsize; one link of its anchor chain weighs 225 kilos. Its two propellers are each ten meters in diameter.

The *Marie Maersk* can hold 18,270 containers, 2500 more than the largest ship held just two years ago. If all these containers were loaded onto one train, it would need to be 110 kilometres long. The ship is so large that only a few deep-water ports in the world can accommodate it; currently all are located in Asia and Europe.

As the *Aquila's* captain expertly pulls alongside the *Marie Maersk*, I see the sea vibrating around it and hear a deep rumbling as its mighty twin 43,000-horsepower diesel engines slow the 195,000-tonne behemoth to seven knots.

I look up at the massive blue steel hull and see crewmembers opening a hatch about halfway up the ship. Then they unfurl a nine-metre rope ladder. Kijlstra gingerly clambers up it and I follow, gripping the thick ropes tight. The ladder sways as I climb and its wooden rungs slap against the ship. I remember what a Maersk official had told me about boarding this ship: "Be careful. It will be dark. It can be dangerous. And it can be a bit scary."

She was right. Climbing up a rope ladder onto a moving ship in the dead of night, kilometres out at sea, is not for the fainthearted. Finally near the pilot door, strong arms grab me and pull me safely into the ship. Jacob Meyer Skou, the ship's chief





*An EEE-class ship is a hulking presence in the Port of Copenhagen.*

officer, an affable Dane with 20 years of sailing experience, steadies me and greets me with a smile: “Welcome aboard the *Marie Maersk*.”

**“CHANGING COURSE TO zero-nine-five. Engine speed to half ahead.”** Nearly 60 metres above the North Sea, in the *Marie Maersk*’s low-lit, glassed-in control bridge, Kijlstra relays new course coordinates and ship speed to Captain Ole Bech Nielsen, 57, who stands nearby at the high-tech control console.

The soft-spoken Dane, who recently completed his 40th year with Maersk Line, orders the helmsman to steer the new course and changes the engine telegraph setting to “half ahead.” Skou stands by to assist Nielsen.

Although Nielsen still controls the

ship, for the next several hours he will rely on Kijlstra’s expertise to guide the massive container ship into the port of Rotterdam. “The pilot knows the local waters, the port and the traffic like the back of his hand,” explains Nielsen. “As another captain once said, we may own the car but he owns the parking lot.”

Kijlstra, who will be in constant contact with port authorities, has installed his own portable GPS navigation system on the ship to use during the time he is on board. “It’s accurate down to one centimetre,” he says.

Such pinpoint accuracy is paramount. In some places there may be only a few metres’ clearance between the hull and the seabed. A mistake here, such as a ship being grounded, could cost the shipping lines millions in lost time and revenues.



"Time is money," says Nielsen, who explains that the *Marie Maersk*, one of Maersk's 15 new EEE-class ships that currently ply the route from Asia to Europe, has to keep to a tight schedule. As we look out from the bridge at the rows of containers stacked aboard, he explains, "We are scheduled to be docked by nine this morning, when unloading will begin. We simply can't be late."

A delivery delay can be disastrous for stores in lost sales revenues, and for manufacturers who may have to delay their production schedules. "And we have perishable food in refrigerated containers ('reefers') that have to be unloaded and shipped to supermarkets."

After leaving Korea 32 days ago and stopping in seven ports, including China, the *Marie Maersk* is scheduled to unload 1525 containers in Rotterdam. Since this is an "import" call, just 28 containers will be taken on board at this stop.

**T**ODAY'S EEE BEHEMOTHS are a far cry from the ships of just a few decades ago. "The first Maersk ship I joined in 1975 could carry 10,000 tonnes," says Nielsen. "It was considered a 'big ship' then. Today we are carrying 20 times as much in just one ship! Back then it could take a week to unload and load a ship. Now we do it in less than 24 hours."

Maersk's 20-ship EEE fleet—five are still under construction—is costing

the company over \$3.8 billion. The family-owned conglomerate, which is the world's largest container shipping company, is betting that an expanding global economy will keep these megaships filled to capacity on the lucrative Asia-Europe route. By designing more efficient engines and employing slow steaming, sailing at 16 knots an hour instead of 22, the company saves over a million dollars in reduced fuel costs on a typical journey between Asia and Europe. Last year Maersk made a profit of over two billion dollars.

But there are many challenges ahead, including falling freight rates in response to stalling or shrinking economies in Europe and China and overcapacity in the container shipping industry. China Shipping recently launched a new ship, the *CSCL Globe*, two metres longer than EEE-class ships and capable of carrying 19,100 containers. "We're not using the full capacity of our EEE's yet," says Miranda van der Meijden, Maersk Line's Director of Trade and Marketing for the Netherlands Cluster.

As the first bright lights of the Port of Rotterdam, still a few kilometres away, glimmer through the fog, the pilot says to Nielsen, "Change course to zero-nine-seven." The captain orders the helmsman to steer zero-nine-seven.

By just past 8am, Kijlstra, with the assistance of two powerful tug boats that have been nudging and hauling the *Marie Maersk*, has threaded the

needle of scores of other ships, barges and watercraft on the Maas River and entered Rotterdam's busy Europahaven container port. Now Kijlstra and Nielsen are negotiating a dramatic 180-degree turn to starboard, with the help of the tugs and the ship's bow thrusters, powerful propellers that help move the ship sideways.

The thrusters help ease the 400-metre ship into its 450-metre "parking space" at the dock, and the port's crew fix the ship's mooring lines to bollards on shore. Once the final line is winched tight, Nielsen and Kijlstra signal the port that the ship is safely alongside and unloading can begin. It is exactly 9:01.

"A minute late," says Nielsen with a wide smile. "We can always make that up on the next trip."

A FINELY choreographed unloading process begins. A virtual army of dockworkers and port workers swarms over the ship's containers and along the quayside. Some clamber onto the *Marie Maersk* and begin removing lashing bars that help lock the containers in place and keep them from shifting in rough seas. Others prepare to remove each container's four corner "twist locks," devices that fasten each container to the one above and below it.



*Twin 10-metre propellers are fitted onto a ship in Korea.*

Five massive 120-metre-tall ship-to-shore cranes are slowly wheeled into position along the ship's starboard side. Their 70-metre-long lifting arms are lowered into place across the entire 55-metre width of the ship. These cranes are capable of lifting 100 tonnes.

An operator on each crane uses high-tech joysticks to lower an 11-tonne rectangular "hook" or "spreader" on cables into the ship's bay or stacks of containers. Time after time, with a loud "thud," the hook latches onto the four corners of a 13,600-kilo

container and swings it high into the air and back to the quayside, where it is lowered some 40 metres to the flotilla of specialized port vehicles that will receive the containers. It takes an average of just two minutes to take off each container.

A team of port controllers oversee the entire process, via a bank of video monitors and two-way radios, from a nearby four-storey high, glassed-in control room.

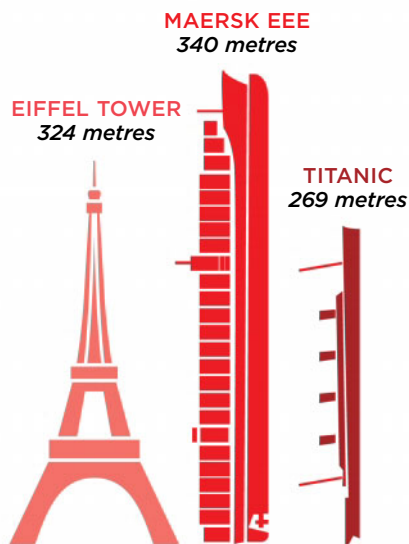
The unloading process follows a strict game plan that details exactly which containers are to be removed and where they are to be placed. "Fresh food such as bananas and meat have to be placed on a waiting truck for immediate delivery to grocery customers," explains APM Ter-

minals' Operations Support Manager Jos van Peperstraten. "Other containers may go to a barge to be transported via rivers into Europe, onto a train or stored here at the port for later transshipment."

**WHILE UNLOADING CONTINUES**, some of the crew grab a quick dinner in the ship's mess hall. I meet Robert Aldrin Martinez, 43, one of the ship's several able seamen. He's on a four-hour break awaiting the start of his next shift.

Martinez, who is from the Philippines, has been a seaman for 17 years and quickly admits that the *Marie Maersk* is the "most comfortable" ship he has ever worked on. "It's huge and takes some time to know your way around it," he says, "but there's lots to do here." Adds, Menandro Lopez, 46, another crew-member from the Philippines, "It's great but we're also away from our families a long time."

Each of the 21 crew members has his (they are all male) own cabin with private bathroom. Nielsen's quarters consist of a roomy 28-square-metre bedroom and an adjoining day room. Martinez and Lopez, like the ship's other able seamen, who are among the lowest-ranking crew members, are on board for six months at a time, (working two four-hour shifts a day), flown home by Maersk for several months, then back for their next "rotation." By contrast, the captain



and senior officers do 11 to 13 weeks aboard and the same time at home.

"I miss my wife and my baby daughter Maya," admits Martinez. "But I talk to them on Skype and keep in touch with e-mail." Facilities to keep the crew entertained include a well-stocked exercise room, a cinema room, a library, an internet room, two day rooms, a video room with movie-theatre-style seating and even a barbecue area on an outer deck. Each Saturday the entire crew, except for one on-duty officer, sits down together for a lavish dinner—usually steak and potatoes, followed by ice cream. But alcohol is always forbidden on board.

**T**HE FINAL CONTAINER is unloaded by dusk and loading begins just after 7pm. So far, so good. However, loading a container ship is more complex than unloading. Dockworkers have to follow a detailed load list, devised by a Maersk stowage planner. Containers have to be stowed on board in just the right order so they can be unloaded at a future port without having to move other containers. Stowage planners also have to take weight into account. Some loaded containers may weigh more than 30 tonnes. Cargo ships have split apart and sunk due to uneven

weight distribution or shifting cargo.

By 9pm the last container has been loaded onto the *Marie Maersk* and the gantry cranes' long loading arms have been raised away from the ship. Dockworkers tighten the last of the criss-crossed lashing bars to stabilize the containers on the ship. Others have double-checked that the reefers are running properly.

With a new pilot aboard, the captain radios his crew to remove the slip lines. It is now 11:30pm. "We're a little bit ahead of schedule," says Nielsen as he takes up his position on the bridge. Thanks to the efficient crane operators, dockworkers and the ship's crew, the *Marie Maersk* meets yet another deadline and sets off for Germany. Nielsen explains that Maersk's EEEs lead the industry in on-time reliability scores, meeting arrival and departure deadlines over 99 percent of the time.

Nielsen turns the thrusters on and the *Marie Maersk* begins to inch away from the quayside. Next stop, Bremerhaven, Germany, then on to Poland, Denmark and Sweden. Then it's back to Bremerhaven and Rotterdam to take on containers before the *Marie Maersk* begins another 37-day, 18,500-kilometre voyage to South Korea, halfway around the world. **R**



Be a good listener. Your ears will never get you in trouble.

FRANK TYGER



# Switched at Birth

Two women leave a hospital in Romania, each holding an infant who doesn't belong to her

BY ADA BUCUR

**T**he two blonde, blue-eyed toddlers were banging their spoons against plates, anxious to be given the cake they were promised. Although they were making an unbelievable clatter, the mothers did not mind. They were laughing, chatting and keeping their eyes on the boys. It was impossible to tell from the love and care they displayed towards the children which child belonged to whom. It was the picture of a perfect friendship. But it began in a private tragedy. ➡➡





*Ionela Neaga (left),  
Ramona Stefan and their  
children, Edi (front)  
and Eli, on the day  
the toddlers turned  
16 months old.*

**ON A COOL SPRING DAY** in May 2013, Ionela Neaga, 32, was preparing to give her three-day-old son his first bath at home. Ionela had asked her goddaughter, Ancuta Enea, to come and help her because she was tired. Ancuta, who had a child only a few months earlier, was more comfortable handling a newborn than Ionela, whose firstborn was already 13.

Ancuta tested the water in the bathtub with her elbow then undressed the baby. Ioana gave her the scissors and asked her to cut off the wristband on the baby's arm, placed there by the maternity ward for identification. She wanted to keep it.

"Give it to me," Ionela said, putting out her hand.

But the young woman couldn't take her eyes off the small blue transparent plastic rectangle. She only managed to speak a few words: "But there is another name written on his bracelet."

"What do you mean another name? What name?" Ionela asked.

"Stefan," Ancuta replied, lifting her eyes to meet Ionela's.

Ionela was red in the cheeks from the heat inside the house. Her brown hair, medium length, was tied back and her blue eyes, shining from the fever of fatigue, enlarged with surprise.

"Stefan? It can't be. I was in the same room with Ramona Stefan. Let me see!"

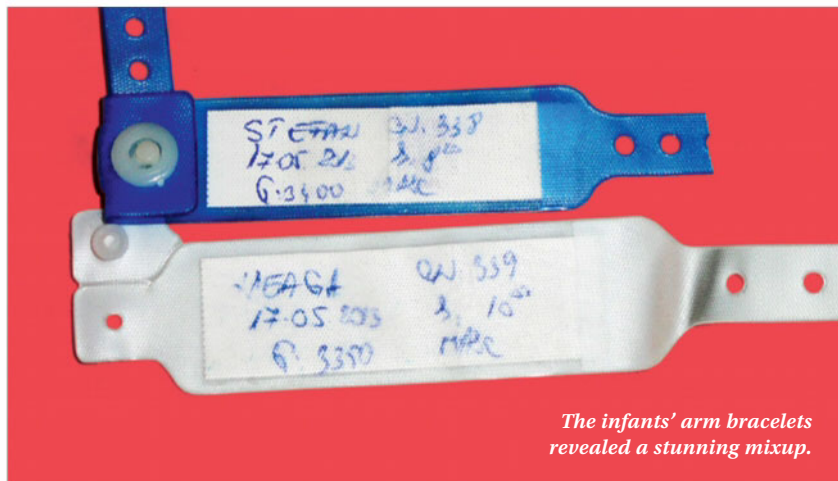
The young mother almost tore the bracelet from Ancuta's hands. The moment she saw with her own eyes

the name Stefan written where the name Neaga should have been, her legs became weak. Then she started shaking and searching for the phone to call Ramona.

**FIVE DAYS EARLIER**, on 15th May, Ramona Stefan, 20, entered the crowded elevator in the maternity hospital in Onesti, Romania. The expectant mother, who had an adolescent's figure and a fair complexion, with black hair and blue eyes, seemed lost in the crowd of patients and nurses. The doctor who had supervised her during her pregnancy told her she'd have to give birth before her due date, through Caesarean section, because the baby hadn't turned in the correct position. So she came to be admitted. In the elevator was another pregnant woman who kept trying to speak on the phone. She seemed agitated. They got off at the same floor.

Ionela Neaga had arrived at the hospital the previous day. She had two weeks until her delivery date, but the doctor had asked her to come in early. The last two months of pregnancy had been difficult. She could barely sleep and her blood pressure oscillated between normal and very high. She was prescribed medicines from the fifth month to prevent a miscarriage.

Now Ionela was returning from the obstetrics section to the ward. She tried to reach her husband, Gheorghe, on the phone, to ask him to



*The infants' arm bracelets revealed a stunning mixup.*



NURSES BROUGHT IN THE TWO BABIES, EACH SWADDLED IN DIAPERS. RAMONA TOOK THE BABY THE NURSE HANDED HER.

bring her the bag she had prepared for birth. She was so preoccupied that she hadn't noticed the young woman entering the elevator with her.

Still, the next day they were both chatting in the ward's corridor. Although there was a difference of almost 12 years between them, they liked each other instantly. Ramona told Ionela that she would have a C-section the next morning. Ionela

confessed that she didn't have a clue about what would happen to her the following day.

On the morning of 17th May, there were two baby boys born at the maternity ward in Onesti: Elian (Eli) Mihaita Stefan at 8:20am, weighing 3.35 kilos. At 10:03am, Eduard (Edi) George Neaga was born, weighing 3.40 kilos. Both mothers had a C-section and woke up after birth in the ICU. Ramona wasn't feeling any pain but she couldn't get out of bed. Ionela was struck by a severe headache.

A few hours later, the nurses brought in the two babies, each swaddled in diapers. Ramona took the baby the nurse handed her, kissed him and took a photo with her mobile phone. Ionela was only shown her baby and told he was all right. She too tried taking a photo to send to her husband,

but she couldn't manage it. Headache and exhaustion rattled her.

The next day, the two mothers were moved to the same ward. The babies were brought in with them. Each bed had a label with the parents' family name on it, and a tag had been placed on the babies' chests, on the diapers they were wrapped in.

Ramona was anxious to go home and asked to be discharged from the hospital on 19th May; Ionela was discharged a day later. The two women promised to keep in touch.

**WHEN RAMONA ARRIVED** home from the hospital, her godmother, Viorica, called to offer help with the baby's bath. The baby had been bathed at the hospital, so Ramona replied that it would be best not to wash the baby twice on such a cold day. The next day, when Ionela called, Ramona thought it was Viorica saying she was coming over.

Instead, Ionela asked Ramona to check her son's arm bracelet and tell her what was written there.

Even as she was saying those words, Ionela thought that if something was wrong, Ramona would surely have noticed it by then and told her. Most likely, she thought, the Stefan family name was written on both bracelets.

Ramona turned to her mother, who was holding the baby, and asked her to look at the bracelet that was on his arm and tell her what it said.

"Neaga! It says Neaga!" the woman answered in amazement.

Ionela had already heard that through the phone. Ramona didn't realize at first whose name it was, although she knew Ionela's name. For the moment she only sensed something terrible had happened. Her desperate scream filled the air: "Dan! Come quick!" Her husband, 32, a well-built man with brown hair, blue eyes and a warm smile, was in the yard when he heard his wife's scream. Feeling an awful dread in the pit of his stomach, he rushed up the stairs and entered the room where his mother-in-law, Ramona and the baby were.

"What happened? Did the boy die?" he asked in one breath. That same second, he noticed his son was all right.

That same evening, both families set out for the maternity hospital.

**"CAN'T YOU SEE** he looks just like you?" the neonatology doctor told Ramona, looking at the baby she was carrying in her arms.

"I know what I delivered to Mrs Neaga!" said the doctor who had performed the C-section on Ionela. The two new mothers, their husbands and relatives who had gathered at the hospital were reassured by the medical staff. Ionela listened. She couldn't imagine that something as awful as switching two babies could actually happen to her. They all returned home.

Ramona chased away any doubts that the baby she was holding in her arms wasn't her baby. Looking at early pictures of herself, she found an extraordinary resemblance between her baby photos and the baby in her arms. But over the next few days, she lost her appetite—the baby wasn't breastfeed-ing and she was losing her milk.

Ionela was more skeptical. As much as she wanted the baby in her arms to be hers, she felt she couldn't live with the uncertainty that it might not be so. She requested a DNA test. She was told she needed an appointment at an office in Bucharest and this could only be done a week later.

Meanwhile Ionela remembered she was told that Ramona's boy was born with regurgitation. But this was written in her baby's medical record. Also, she had taken a closer look at the boy Ramona was holding and remembered that was exactly what her first born, Razvan, looked like when he was a baby. In photos taken 13 years earlier, she saw the same long eyelashes, the same blue eyes and the dimple on the chin. All these thoughts and the uncertainty were making her sick. The only thing that was keeping her going was the fact that she was lactating and she could feed the baby she had at home. She hoped that the DNA test would make everything clear.

**THEY LEFT FOR** Bucharest, the Romanian capital, in their car on 27th May, a week after leaving the mater-

nity hospital. A nurse from the hospital accompanied Ionela and her husband. The lab specialist drew blood from the two parents and swabbed the baby's throat. They were promised the results in ten working days.

By 10th June, Ionela was losing patience. When Gheorghe went to get the DNA results from the courier firm in Onesti, she sat by the phone, wait-



FOR THE MOMENT SHE ONLY SENSED THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAD HAPPENED. HER DESPERATE SCREAM FILLED THE AIR.

ing. With her whole being, she hoped the three-week-old baby sleeping in the next room was hers. She'd grown fond of him. Her husband had the same hope.

It was 5pm when Gheorghe received the envelope, opened it and read the result. He started to cry. The result was "zero." The baby wasn't theirs. He felt he couldn't give this news to his wife. He called Ancuta and asked her to go over to their house and tell Ionela. When her goddaughter entered the yard, Ionela looked at her face and understood. They cried together.

Ramona didn't want to hear from anybody. She knew that was the day when the Neagas would get the test



results. Around five o'clock she climbed a cherry tree to pick the fruit for making jam. She climbed that cherry tree like she was escaping the universe, a universe in which she might find out that her baby wasn't actually hers. But the phone started ringing. Her godfather, Mihaita, shouted to her to pick up the phone.

"Whoever it is, I'm not answering!"



IONELA, WHO WAS NOW CERTAIN HER BABY WAS THE ONE IN RAMONA'S ARMS, WANTED TO HOLD HIM, EVEN FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

the young woman cried out.

Mihaita took the phone. It was Gheorghe. He told him about the DNA test result and said that they were preparing to go to the hospital to get the matter straightened out. They would be waiting there for Ramona and Dan.

**THE FAMILIES MET** at the hospital for the second time. When the medical staff heard the results, none dared to insist there wasn't a problem. But nobody would admit to making a mistake, either. The hospital announced an investigation would be conducted. Ionela had accepted the situation. The only thing she wanted was to

have her baby back and go home. But Ramona refused to accept that the baby wasn't hers and that she would have to go home with another baby that she didn't know.

"This is my baby! Everybody says he looks like me!" Ramona cried.

In the end, she realized things couldn't stay how she wanted them to be, unless there was a way to prove it. So she decided to order a DNA test herself, along with both babies. The thought that kept her going was that the tests would prove Ionela's baby had been mixed up with someone else's. But only one other baby, a girl, had been born at the hospital that day.

Ramona asked that the tests be done urgently. The two mothers then learnt that the test results could be provided quicker, for a higher cost. The expenses were billed to the hospital.

On 17th June, the day the babies turned one month old, the two families left for Bucharest for the new DNA tests. The two mothers with their babies got in the back seat of a hospital car. Ionela, who was now certain her baby was the one in Ramona's arms, wanted to hold him, even for a little while. The two babies looked very much alike. They were both blonde, with blue eyes and fair complexion. Ramona allowed Ionela to take the baby and try to breastfeed him. But the baby, now used to powdered milk, refused.

Two days later, the results confirmed that the two babies had been switched in the maternity hospital.

For the third time, the Neaga and Stefan families met at the hospital.

**SANCTIONS WERE APPLIED** following the Onesti Municipal Hospital Discipline Committee investigation. The head of neonatology there, Dr Cornelia Camarasu, as well as the chief assistant, Luminita Antohi, were demoted. Five nurses who cared for the babies and who were between shifts the day the babies were switched got a ten percent pay-cut for three months. A sixth nurse got a five percent cut for the same period, and four more nurses were given warnings.

Ionela and Ramona say that these measures will never compensate for the nightmare they lived through. The fact that each went home with their own baby on 19th June didn't end the trauma. Neither mother was accustomed to their baby's needs and didn't know how to react to them. For a week Ramona couldn't even approach her baby. Her husband stayed with the boy day and night. "I had lost a lot of weight," says Ramona, "I was lacking any kind of desire and any joy."

Ionela adapted more rapidly to the needs of her baby but the heartache didn't disappear. She needed time to come out of a depression triggered by the situation.

**THE TWO MOTHERS** saw each other as often as they could. And that day in early September 2014 (photo, page 103) was one of those joyful days that the two toddlers spent together.

Ionela went to the fridge and took out the tray of tiramisu specially made for Ramona and Eli's visit. She placed a generous helping on each child's plate. For a while, there was silence. But not for very long. After finishing their dessert, the boys returned to playing and shouting together. The two mothers smiled. Somehow, they both felt that they had more than one son each.

"If Eli is upset and he's crying, the second we enter Ionela's house he calms down," Ramona says with a smile. And Edi laughs with his whole heart, reaching his hand out towards the boy to which—through a dramatic confusion—fate drew him. **R**



## VERY INEFFICIENT POWER

Commenting on a complaint from a Mr Arthur Purdey about a large gas bill, a spokesman for North West Gas said, "We agree it was rather high for the time of year. It's possible Mr Purdey has been charged for the gas used up during the explosion that destroyed his house."

*Source: The Daily Telegraph*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who turns 80 on 6th July, is one of the world's foremost religious leaders. Yet he says...

# *Ethics Is More Important Than Religion*

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BY FRANZ ALT

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HE WEARS ORDINARY SANDALS, and the smile on his face is benign. Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, and I have met more than 30 times in 33 years, and hardly ever have I interviewed anyone so empathic. No one laughs more than he does. According to surveys, he is the world's best-liked person. The news is anything but surprising. "I know no enemies," he said to me more than 20 years ago. "There are just people I haven't met yet."

Although Chinese occupation has forced him to live outside



his Tibetan homeland since 1959, when he moved to India, he feels no hatred for the Chinese or their leaders. On the contrary. "Of course I pray for the communist leaders in Beijing," he says. Despite his age, the Dalai Lama is confident that he will live to see the resolution of the conflict with China over Tibet.

In the last few years, the Dalai Lama has called more and more insistently for an ethic that transcends religion. Today, at 80, he proclaims a view that is surely unique for a religious leader: "Ethics is more important than religion," he says. "We do not arrive in this world as members of a particular religion. But ethics is innate."

One of his central beliefs is that in the pursuit of happiness and the desire to avoid suffering, all human beings are alike.

**Franz Alt:** *After the terrorist attack in Paris you said, "There are days when I think it would be better if there were no religions!" What did you mean?*

**Dalai Lama:** The knowledge and the practice of religion has of course been helpful, but today this is no longer enough, as examples from all over the world show more and more clearly. This is true of all religions, including Christianity and Buddhism. Wars have been waged in the name of religion, "holy wars" even. Religions have been and still are frequently intolerant.

This is why I say that in the 21st

century we need a new ethic that transcends all religions. Far more crucial than religion is our elementary human spirituality. It is a predisposition towards love, kindness, and affection that we all have within us, whatever religion we belong to. In my view, people can do without religion, but they cannot do without inner values, without ethics.

***What gave you the idea that we need more spirituality than the traditional religions have to offer?***

I've been in Indian exile for 56 years. It is a society that lives by a secular ethic. Mahatma Gandhi was profoundly religious, but he was also a secular spirit. He was a great admirer of Jesus and his pacifism of the Sermon on the Mount. He is my role model because he embodied religious tolerance. This tolerance is a deeply rooted force in India. With very few exceptions, we find not only Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs living here in peace, but also Jainists, Buddhists, Jews, agnostics and atheists.

I know there are repeated cases of local violence. But it would be wrong to generalize. All in all, Indian society is peaceful and harmonious. All religious persuasions uphold the ancient Indian principle of non-violence, *ahimsa*, with which Gandhi was politically so successful. It was the foundation for peaceful co-existence. That is a practical secular ethic that transcends all religions. The present-day world would do well to emulate it!





**“Happiness is not just a coincidence. It is a capacity that every individual has at their disposal.”**

*Among the six billion “believers” in the world, there are many who do not take their own religion seriously.*

Among those six billion there are unfortunately many corrupt people who only pursue their own interests. But there will only be more external peace on Earth when there is more internal peace. This is true of all the conflicts going on now—the Ukraine, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Nigeria. Almost everywhere, religious fundamentalism is one of the causes for war. We know very well that it would be tantamount to collective suicide if we were to risk nuclear war. This alone shows how dependent we are on one another.

Modern neurobiological research suggests very strongly that altruistic behaviour is more rewarding than egoism. People do not have to be self-ish, they can just as easily be altruistic and gear their activities to the welfare of others. Altruism makes us happier!

Happiness is not just a coincidence; it is a capacity that every individual has at their disposal. Everyone can be, or become, happy. Modern research

tells us what factors have a bearing on happiness. Step by step we can transform the factors that militate against happiness. This is true of individuals and the whole of society.

The aim of a secular ethic is to free us of momentary and long-term suffering and to develop the ability to support others in the pursuit of happiness. One aspect of compassion is the spontaneous willingness to act for the welfare of others.

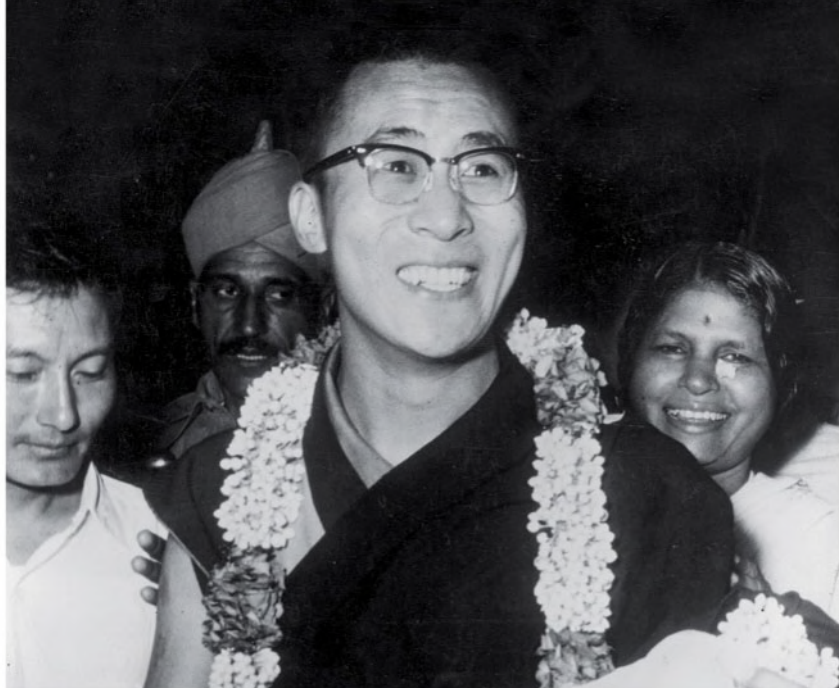
*You attach great importance to modern brain research. Why?*

Our brain is a learning organ. Neuropsychology tells us that we can train our brains like we train our muscles. In this way we can be consciously recipient to the fine and the good, we can influence our brains positively and overcome what is negative. With the aid of mind and spirit we can change our brains for the better. This is revolutionary progress.

Thanks to this progress we are now more certain of the fact that ethics, compassion, and social behaviour are things we are born with, while religion is something instilled into us. The conclusion from that is that ethics runs deeper and is more natural than religion.

*What questions must we ask ourselves to further develop our capacity for compassion?*

Are we open-minded or narrow-minded? Have we considered the



*The world's most prominent refugee arrives in New Delhi on 7 September 1959—his first visit to the capital since seeking asylum.*

whole situation or are we only concerned with partial aspects? Are we thinking and acting holistically? Do we genuinely look at things in a long-term perspective or only in the short term? Are our actions truly motivated by sincere compassion? Is our compassion limited to family and friends because we are largely able to identify with them?

We must reflect, reflect, reflect. And we need research, research, and more research. Ethics has mainly to do with our spiritual condition and not with the formal membership in a religious community. We must overcome our self-imposed restrictions and learn to

understand the views of others.

So talk to each other! Realize that we are living in an age of globalization. The new motto must be “your interests are our interests.” Fundamentalism is always harmful. Yesterday’s ideas will get us nowhere. Especially for children, tomorrow’s adults, ethics is more important than religion.

Climate change is another thing we can only come to grips with globally. I hope and pray that at the next climate summit in Paris late this year, this undeniable truth will finally produce concrete results. Egoism, nationalism, and violence are the wrong course. The most important question for a

better world is: "How can we serve each other?"

*Every day we wipe out 150 animal and plant species, blow 150 million tonnes of greenhouse gases into the air. What can a secular ethic do to stop this?*

Mindfulness, education, respect, tolerance, caring, and non-violence. In the last century we made huge progress in material terms. All in all, this was a good thing. But this progress has also led to the crippling damage we are doing to the environment. In the 21st century we must learn, cultivate, and apply inner values at all levels.

Regardless of whether we believe in a religion or not, we all have this primal, elementary, human, ethical wellspring in us. We must cultivate this ethical foundation. It will help us to preserve the environment. This is practical religion and practical ethics.

There are two ways of looking at human nature. One of them says that by nature human beings are violent, ruthless, and aggressive. The other view is that we are naturally attuned to kindness, harmony, and living in peace. This second view is my own. Accordingly, I do not consider ethics to be a collection of commandments and prohibitions for us to observe and adhere to but a natural, inner drive that can inspire us to seek happiness and satisfaction for ourselves and others. The very simple wish that inspires me is to contribute to the greater good



**"We are living in an age of globalization. The new motto must be "your interests are our interests."**

of humanity and the living world.

Ethical instruction from about the age of 14 is more important than religion. Education changes everything. People are capable of learning. In Germany we can see this from the fall of the Berlin Wall. Witnessing that was an unforgettable experience for me. Or take the policies of the European Union after World War II. Today, former enemies work together to build and share a peaceful Europe. For that the EU was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Quite rightly!

***What can each and every one of us do to make the world a more peaceful and a better place?***

If we want to make this world a better place, then we have to become better ourselves. There is no easy route. First of all, we have to see our enemies as human beings. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls this "loving your enemy." In our own best interests, we should do everything in our power to ensure that all living beings can thrive. For that we need spiritual schooling and education of the heart. ➡➡

## BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

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**1935** The future Dalai Lama is born in Tibet on 6th July as the son of a farmer. At age two he is recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, and enthroned in Lhasa at age four and a half. He is given the name Tenzin Gyatso.

**1950** The People's Liberation Army of China occupies Tibet. The Dalai Lama, 15, assumes full political power over his country.

**1954** He travels to Beijing for peace talks with Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping—to no avail.

**1959** The Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule is quelled by the Chinese; 90,000 Tibetans lose their lives; thousands more flee Tibet. The Dalai Lama establishes a government-in-exile at Dharamsala.

**1966-1976** During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, almost all 6000 monasteries in Tibet are razed to the ground.

**1987** The Dalai Lama announces a “middle way.” Tibet no longer calls for independence from China, merely for autonomy within the Chinese state.

**1989** He is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

**2011** The Dalai Lama hands over the political leadership of Tibet to Lobsang Songay, elected prime minister of the government-in-exile in a free ballot. The Dalai Lama proclaims his desire to live on as an “ordinary monk in a monastery,” but many Tibetans still accord him something akin to divine status. —FA


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After 1945, Europe chose the right path and ensured cooperation between former enemies. Thus enemies became friends. This was only feasible because millions of people consciously chose to tread that path.

The real enemy is the enemy within, not the external one. External enmities never last, and the enmity between China and Tibet is no exception. If we respect our enemies, some day they can become our friends.

This is why my allegiance to non-

violence is unswerving. That is an intelligent form of love of enemies. Intense meditation tells us that enemies can become our best friends. In this way we can achieve greater serenity, greater compassion, and greater acumen. Then we have a real chance of making the 21st century a century of peace, a century of dialogue, and a century of caring, responsible, and compassionate humanity.

This is what I hope for, this is what I pray for. 

THE DALAI LAMA'S APPEAL TO THE WORLD BY FRANZ ALT © 2015 BY FRANZ ALT, IS PUBLISHED BY BENEVENTO PUBLISHING, SALZBURG

# Shocking Notes

FROM ALL OVER

## MODIFICATION MADNESS

### VOCAL COACHING

Want to sound more like Amitabh Bachchan? At the Texas Voice Center in Houston, USA, clients have been undergoing a procedure called “fat injection thyroplasty” to deepen the timbre of their speech. During the operation, a patient’s fat is shot into the vocal cords, making them thicker and bulkier—changing their vibration and, in turn, if all goes well, dropping the voice’s pitch.

### RED IN THE FACE

The fountain of youth is filled with blood, it would seem. “Vampire facials,” medically known as PRP (platelet-rich plasma) procedures, are gaining in popularity in Britain and the United States, despite the off-putting nickname. Blood is removed from the patient, then placed in a centrifuge, which separates the platelet-rich plasma from the red and white blood cells.



Following that, the plasma is injected back into the patient’s face, where it stimulates the production of collagen.

### ALL-SEASON BEARD

Thanks to beard-transplant surgery, even the patchy-faced can sport full-time scruff—if they’re willing to bear the expense. At Face Cosmetic Surgery, a Toronto, Canada, clinic owned by Dr Jamil Asaria, the procedure can cost anywhere from \$5000 to \$15,000, depending on the number of hairs transplanted and how they’re harvested. Usually, 500 to 2500 follicles are taken from the head and individually grafted, a process that can take up to a day.

### FINALLY, LOCAL OFFERINGS

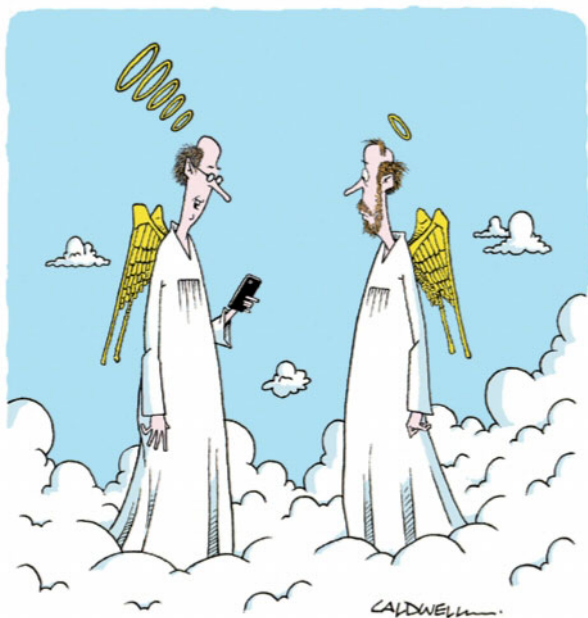
Some Indian trends: Mommy makeovers to fix body changes due to pregnancy. Men makeovers. Wedding makeovers for physical enhancements prior to the big day. One centre’s advertisement says: “Growing old is inevitable. Looking young is negotiable.”





ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*"This is a good spot. I'm getting a really strong signal."*

**THE BEST EVER** legal advice spotted on a hoarding came from an ad for a law office: "Just because you did it doesn't mean you're guilty."

[funnyordie.com](http://funnyordie.com)

**A FRIEND OF MINE** works at a tattoo shop. A client walked in and got a sentence tattooed on his back. A few hours later, the customer called,

demanding a refund.

**Client:** You did my tattoo backwards!

**Tattoo artist:** It's backwards?

**Client:** Yes! I'm looking at it in the mirror right now!

[clientsfromhell.net](http://clientsfromhell.net)

**I BROUGHT A FROZEN** dessert in a plastic container and left it in the freezer in the office pantry. Then, around 1pm, seeing a colleague walk

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CALDWELL

to the pantry to warm her lunch, I requested her to “please bring the stuff I left in the freezer.” Very kindly, she returned with my container having done me an additional favour. “I’ve also microwaved it for you,” she said.

M.S., Mumbai

**WE WERE MAKING** leaflets for a local church, and the client wanted a logo designed with Earth being shielded by the hand of God. I sent the client a proof. Shortly thereafter, I got a call.

**Client:** The hand looks too human. Please use a hand that looks more like God’s.

clientsfromhell.net

**AN APPLICANT FOR** an open teaching job submitted a résumé. Under the heading Qualities and Skills, she listed, “Impeachable character and integrity.”

M.O., from the internet



**LATER:** Yay, We're Closed!

Source: *The Mad World of Sign Language*

**RELIGION IS** generally a taboo topic for everyone at work, except for Larry. Recently, after he steered yet another conversation towards the subject, a co-worker whispered to me, “That Larry—he always has to put his two saints in.”

MARK LATESSA

**I HATE BEING** self-employed: whenever I want to complain about my boss to my friends, she’s always there.

ADARA SAJTOS



## OOH, OOH, I KNOW, I KNOW!

These smart-alecky answers show why teachers need their summer vacations.

**Q:** What’s the name of a six-sided polygon?

**A:** Sixagon.

**Q:** What part of the body is affected by glandular fever?

**A:** The glandular.

**Q:** In *The Tempest*, why does Ariel sing in Gonzalo’s ear?

**A:** She’s a mermaid and wants to be human.

**Q:** In comparison with large hydrocarbons, how would you describe small hydrocarbons?

**A:** They’re smaller.

**Q:** Who were the Bolsheviks?

**A:** A Russian ballet company.

From *F in Exams: Pop Quiz*,  
by Richard Benson (Chronicle Books)



# Dear Kate

Following our daughter's death, my husband and I saw no end to the grief. But in time we have found meaning, hope, and even joy

**BY NANCY COMISKEY**  
FROM INDIANAPOLIS MONTHLY



**O**ne morning in June 2004, I peeked into the room where my 23-year-old daughter, Kate, was curled up in the white wrought-iron bed she had slept in as a child. Gazing at her lovely face, framed by wild, curly hair, I said to myself I could not draw another breath if anything happened to this child.

Five months later in Bloomington, USA, as Kate drove to Indian Creek High School to teach English, a 45-year-old man high on opiates and cocaine crashed into her Honda Civic.

I did draw another breath. And one after that. And one after that.





On Kate's first birthday after her death, I wrote her a long letter. I planned to burn it and put the ashes in the stone wall my husband, Steve, was building in her memory at our cottage in Maine. At the last minute I decided to make a copy. Every birthday since then, I've written her a letter, telling her about births and deaths, marriages and breakups, kindnesses and disappointments—but also about everyday things like the antics of her little Labrador mix, Lola.

A year after her death, I had “no brilliant insights on healing and hope,” I said then. Nine years later, I'm sharing the story of what I've learnt since, along with passages from those letters to Kate.

If my experience helps someone better understand the loss of a child, if it offers hope to those facing challenges of their own, then Kate's life continues to have meaning. And that is a gift I can still give her.

## Reality Sets In

*“Magical’ is a word we often use to describe you. Not that you were a saint. You smoked, you could be stubborn, and you liked having things your way. But your capacity for giving and accepting love, for appreciating the beauty in small things, for making people laugh, was truly magical ... I loved that you were so astonishingly beautiful, but I loved who you were inside more. It’s that inner light that I miss the most.” —July 2005*

In many ways, the second and third years after losing a child are even harder than the first. When your child dies, the blow is so profound that you go into a numbing, emotional shock.

Less than an hour after being told of Kate's death, I sat in the hospital's waiting room and asked a colleague about her classes that semester. I didn't shed a tear at Kate's funeral. I was back teaching journalism at Indiana University a week later.

The numbness begins to fade about the same time people around you move on with their lives. The flood of calls and notes becomes a trickle. You see a neighbour duck into the next grocery aisle to avoid you.

Keeping up an appearance of normalcy in the early years required constant vigilance. I'd take long walks in the woods where no one could see me cry or hear me talking to Kate. One evening we were playing cards with friends when their son called. The father rolled his eyes in mock protest at the interruption and said he'd call him back tomorrow. I left the room and braced my arms on the bathroom dressing table. I would have traded every day of the rest of my life for that 30-second call. But I returned with a smile. No one was the wiser.

The sorrow and anger that followed Kate's death, however, pale next to the terrible yearning. “Sometimes I feel panic sweeping over me,” I wrote to a friend, “and I'm so overwhelmed with



*'Magical' is a word often used to describe Kate.*

yearning for Kate that I don't know how I'll manage."

I found the Yale Bereavement Study on the internet, and it suggested yearning was the most distressing symptom of grief, especially in the first two years. The study included people who had lost a husband or wife, a parent, or a brother



## THE ANGER AND THE SORROW THAT FOLLOWED KATE'S DEATH PALE NEXT TO THE TERRIBLE YEARNING.

or sister. I wrote to one of the authors, Holly G. Prigerson, to ask why parents who had lost children weren't included. Losing a child, she told me, is so many "orders of magnitude worse" that it couldn't be meaningfully compared to other losses.

On his third birthday without Kate, Steve and I were standing in our kitchen, crying. "It's not that I want her back," he said. "It's not that I need her back. It's that I have to have her back."

The yearning came in waves, and when it was at its worst, when I wasn't sure I wanted to go on, I repeated these lines: "This is how you feel now. But just hang on and see how you feel

tomorrow." Somehow, things always seemed a bit better the next day.

Oddly, the only time I felt what I might call relief in those first years came when I jumped in an ice-cold lake after a hike. The water drove away every other sensation—the weight, the sadness, the anger, even the yearning. And, for a few brief seconds, I remembered what life had felt like before.

### Testing Times

*"What I need most is the strength to look beyond my sorrow and not judge others too harshly. I'll be more accepting of people for who they are. I'll show more courage. And I will do everything*

*I can't see that your memory stays alive." —July 2006 and 2007*

Six months after Kate was killed, Steve got a call from a friend in New York he hadn't seen or spoken to for more than a decade. On a whim, he had googled Steve's name and found the news stories of Kate's death. He told Steve he was flying down to meet us. He ended up staying with us for a few days, and we've been close friends with him and his wife ever since.

Every bereaved parent I know has

the implication was that God hadn't guided the hands of the man who crushed Kate's car.

When bereaved parents get together, we often share the odd things people say to us.

"I know how you feel—my grandfather died last year." (Yes, that's sad, but it's not in the same universe as losing a child.)

"I always tell my kids not to drive on that road." (So, my daughter would be alive today if I had done the same?)

"Everything happens for a reason."



## WHEN BEREAVED PARENTS GET TOGETHER, WE OFTEN SHARE THE ODD THINGS PEOPLE SAY TO US.

stories like this. A casual acquaintance or a friend from the past steps up and becomes a lifeline. Sadly, the opposite is true as well. Every parent loses good friends they believed would always be a part of their lives.

One of Steve's longtime friends gave a reading at Kate's funeral. But when Steve didn't bounce back as he expected, they argued and parted ways.

To be fair, we were sometimes the ones who pulled away. Shortly after Kate's death, a woman wrote to tell me her husband's prostate surgery was a success. God had guided the surgeon's hands, she said. I know she didn't mean it this way, but for me,

(It would be nice if that were true, but it's no comfort whatsoever.)

Most people who say thoughtless things just blunder into it. And saying anything—even if it's unwittingly hurtful—is better than saying nothing. When someone avoids the subject entirely, you feel even more isolated.

Yet we have made adjustments. Some dear friends can listen to almost anything, no matter how painful. Others don't want to hear about the sorrow but are okay with happy Kate stories. And we also have friends who seem to panic at the mention of her name. Now I realize that, for them, seeking us out, knowing there is a chance we'll bring

her up, is a gesture of compassion.

It's hard to pin down what separates people who step up from those who disappear. We've found no correlation between empathy and a person's age, gender, education, religious beliefs, or even whether they have children. These people do share what Steve describes as a secular "grace": the courage to reach out to grieving parents, to listen without changing the subject or giving advice, and to bring up a child's name—the most wonderful gift of all.

After Kate was killed, two longtime friends of ours hauled a trailer to her house and packed up her belongings the week before Christmas. A casual friend at Steve's school brought him lunch every day for a year. A lawyer friend sat with us through every criminal hearing as the offender was convicted of drunken driving causing death.

Not everyone who reached out to us in the past decade is still in our lives. Time and distance and life's complications have intervened. But I keep a special place in my heart for those who've helped us make it this far.

## Holding Pattern

*"Dad and I are still in a holding pattern with our lives. We get through each day with the terrible heaviness in our hearts. I know you wouldn't want that, and I'm trying to do some new things ... People say how strong we are and they're glad we've 'gotten through*

*it,' but nothing could be further from the truth."* —July 2008

**B**y the fifth year after Kate's death, we had sunk into a routine with fewer towering waves of grief but little happiness.

I threw myself into projects in Kate's memory. I made slideshows and edited videos she'd taken. I sewed quilts for friends who had done so much for us, always using a few scraps of Kate's clothing.

Surviving took so much of our energy that we had little reserve for the everyday bumps and bruises of life. Once, we welcomed a close friend and his new girlfriend into our home for a visit. Three weeks later, they sent us a list of what we, the bereaved parents, had done wrong and what we needed to do to make them feel more comfortable. We tried to patch things up, but the friendship was over.

Major setbacks shattered whatever relief we found in routine. My mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the spring of 2009 and died that summer. Mistakes in the sentencing of the man who killed Kate meant that the case had to be reopened. One day we were making progress, and the next we were back in the early throes of grief.

Certain days are always harder than others. Birthdays become more—not less—important after a child's death. This is the day you hope others will pause and recall your son or daughter. As one mother whose child was killed

14 years ago told me, “Every year I ask myself: ‘Is this the year when no one remembers my daughter’s birthday?’”

Steve and I did the best we could at family and holiday gatherings. Our son, Daniel, had lost not only the sister he loved, but the parents he had known. We worried about how Kate’s death would affect him. So we wrapped presents and put up a tree and baked a turkey. But we all knew the table was missing a chair.

Weddings evoke conflicting emotions; you’re happy for the couple, but

and a young woman’s voice said, “Hello, you’ve reached the Comiskey keys...” It was Kate. Somehow our answering machine had lost power, and the greeting defaulted to a phone in the basement. What hurt most was it took me a few seconds to recognize my daughter’s voice.

## Remembering

*“You touched so many lives in your 24 years, and I know they remember you even if they don’t always think to tell us. I can promise you this: You will*



THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOMENT  
THAT FOREVER DIVIDES YOUR LIFE INTO  
‘BEFORE’ AND ‘AFTER’ IS THE WORST.

at the same time you mourn for what your child will never know. “Funerals are a lot easier,” a bereaved father told us recently. At a funeral, everyone is sad. At a wedding, you’re the only one whose heart is breaking.

The anniversary of the moment that forever divides your life into “before” and “after” is the worst. An ache settles into your heart weeks before, and the days leading up to it are actually worse than the anniversary itself. When that day is over, you breathe again, knowing you have another full year before it returns.

But some emotional jolts come without warning. Once, I called home,

*be in my thoughts and my heart every hour of whatever life remains to me. Your name will be the last word I say and your beautiful face will be the last thing I see.” —July 2010*

**A**fter Kate’s death, I thought friends, colleagues, and even strangers would know how I was feeling and what I needed them to do and say. It was almost as if I wrote a script, didn’t show it to them, and then got upset when they didn’t know their lines.

I looked to Kate’s friends most of all to fill some of the terrible emptiness. Being with them was as close as we could get to being with her. They

*Kate and her father in a relaxed moment.*



beginning. While they missed Kate deeply, their initial grief had eased.

I understood for the first time, then, that if I was going to survive without my daughter, I had to find the will to do that within myself. I could hope that people would keep her

wrote to us and visited. Three asked us to take part in their weddings, and another gave her daughter the middle name Kate.

I wrote to them often and sent cards on their birthdays. If they heard from me, I reasoned, they would think of her.

In 2008, Steve and I organized a reunion at our home. We viewed the day as a kind of memorial and put together a video of the trips Kate's friends had taken in her memory with money we gave them from her insurance. Two of her friends travelled far to be there, but others had to work late or leave early or miss the gathering altogether. It wasn't what we'd anticipated.

Looking back, I see that my expectations were unrealistic. Kate's friends were now in their late twenties, moving to new places and starting new jobs; their adult lives were just

in their hearts, but I couldn't expect them to express it in a scripted way.

I still write notes to Kate's friends on their birthdays and keep up with their lives on Facebook. I'm always happy to see or hear from them, but I don't worry so much if I don't. And we've become even closer to some of her friends in a quiet, natural way.

Not long ago, Steve and I were having pizza in Bloomington. When he handed his credit card to the waitress, she looked at his name and asked, "Did you know Kate Comiskey?" When Steve said he was Kate's father, the young woman's eyes filled with tears, and she threw her arms around him. She was one of Kate's students, she said, and had been thinking about Kate that week. Her words reminded us that even if we don't always know it, Kate is remembered by those whose lives she touched.



*Kate (seated) with some of her high school students.*

## Glimmers of Hope

*"We've made more new friends this year who have also lost children.... They have helped us even though we're 'ahead' of many of them in our grief. It makes me feel stronger just to write about these wonderful people."*

—July 2010 and 2011

For a long time after Kate's death, we had only occasional contact with other mothers and fathers who had lost children. Then we got a call from a couple whose daughter had drowned. We started having dinners together, finding solace in our shared loss. A year later, we met a couple whose 20-year-old daughter had died in a car accident. They organized a quiet dinner for six couples. That gathering changed our course of grief.

At first glance, we are a motley group. We are Baptists and Buddhists and nonbelievers. Among us are artists, teachers, administrators, a real-estate agent, a priest, and a crisis counsellor. But we share a powerful bond: All of us lost our children just as they were blossoming into young adults.



From that first meeting, we felt an overwhelming sense of ease. We didn't have to be careful about what we did or said—we could share terrible thoughts and know no one would flinch. They understood.

We help each other through the inevitable setbacks and celebrate the small pleasures. We talk about our children freely and joyfully. Everyone listens. No one gives advice or proselytizes. Instead, we share what works for us.

Surprisingly, we laugh a lot. A mother who drove a distance to join us wrote this the next day: "When I'm with parents who have gone through the same experience, I can laugh, and they understand that it's okay. When other people see me on a 'good' day, enjoying life and laughing, they think that I must be 'over it.' They get con-

fused when they see me again and I'm back to my normal self."

While the core group remains intact, we have expanded our circle to include other mothers and fathers. When we meet newly bereaved parents, we try to be honest about what lies ahead but hopeful some relief will come. Most importantly, we all have the comfort of knowing we are not alone.

### Comfort and Joy

*"I finally unpacked all your clothes and washed and dried and hung them neatly ... I couldn't bring myself to*

sary. I drove my 2001 Honda Accord for nine years and 273,500 kilometres after Kate died because it was the last car we sat in together. But few things evoke more powerful memories than your child's clothing.

Kate's clothes remained sealed away in our home for six-and-a-half years. Occasionally, I'd sort through a box to find a skirt or sweater I could wear. Sometimes, when I was overwhelmed with grief, I'd breathe in the air around her clothes, hoping for a hint of her Jean Paul Gaultier "Fragile" perfume.

Then, on a balmy May afternoon



AFTER A CHILD DIES, YOU DON'T KNOW  
FOR WEEKS, MONTHS, OR EVEN YEARS  
WHAT WILL BE PRECIOUS TO YOU.

*wash a few items that still had a trace of your scent, and it struck me that I can't see you or touch you or hear you on earth, but I can still smell your scent. What a powerful idea!"*

—July 2011

**A**fter a child dies, you don't know for weeks, months, or even years what will be precious to you, what will connect you with your child's memory. Every night, I sleep with a little pillow Kate made shortly before her death. On his bedside table, Steve keeps a dish of shells Kate bought us for our 15th anniver-

in 2011, I decided Kate's clothes had been stored in the dark long enough and pulled out pieces one memory at a time. The cabbage-rose skirt she wore to her teaching interview. The strapless black linen dress she wheedled her dad into buying at Banana Republic. The funky skirt she and I made from an old pair of jeans.

I set aside those few things on which a trace of her scent lingered—a pale-blue bridesmaid dress, an ivory mohair cowl-neck, a cropped denim jacket. Then I washed, dried, and folded the other items. I hung the

dresses, blouses, and skirts on hangers in a walk-in closet. I stacked the lingerie in tissue on shelves layered with lavender sachets.

I wrote an e-mail about the day to our parents' group, and their responses stacked up minutes later. A father told us he was dieting, seven years after his son's death, so he could fit into his son's shirts again. A mother found a pair of her daughter's flip-flops in a closet. When she put them on and walked around the house, she heard her daughter's footsteps.

*patience. But we are making progress.*  
—July 2013

Shortly before Kate died, we bought her a mandolin she never had the chance to play. When my husband retired from teaching high school, the other teachers at his school gave him a guitar. Both instruments sat in closets for years. Then one day, we decided to learn to play them. It was a turning point. You don't take music lessons for yesterday or even for today. You take them for tomorrow. And that



WHEN I WRAPPED MYSELF IN THOSE  
FRESHLY WASHED MEMORIES, I FELT  
SURROUNDED BY KATE'S PRESENCE.

I know some people might think it was strange or creepy to do laundry for a child who has died. But when I finished Kate's laundry that afternoon, when I wrapped myself in those freshly washed memories, I felt surrounded by Kate's presence. It made me happy.

## Looking to the Future

*"Sometimes now I look in the mirror and wonder what you would think if you saw me. Would I look terribly old to you? Would you be embarrassed by the things I've done and said? I think you'd be proud of my strength and disappointed in my lack of*

was a new way of thinking.

With the help of a music teacher, we found some other people learning to play guitar, fiddle, banjo, and mandolin, and we became a band. We get together twice a month to play and sing, and we make up in enthusiasm what we lack in talent. "It's okay," says one member, "because we're all pretty good at something else."

Novelist Louise Penny describes the moment despair turns to hope as a tiny point of light—"more imagined than real"—in the darkness of regret and betrayal and loss. For me, that light seemed infinitesimal in the early years after Kate's death. We found

purpose and eventually meaning in scholarships and donations and other things we did in Kate's memory. But hope was elusive. When it came, it was not in sudden epiphanies or flashes of light. Hope, for us, was a slow awakening to the possibility of happiness.

Almost from the beginning, I found purpose in teaching—I often tell people it saved my life. When I prepared for class or graded assignments or talked with students, I had to focus on something besides how I could live another day without Kate.

Teaching also brought me closer to her. Kate taught school only a little over a year, but she was a natural like her father. She could make each student feel like the most important person in the room. When I lead a good class, I feel I'm honouring her memory. Like Kate, my students will always be in their early twenties, with life's possibilities ahead of them. In a sense, teaching is a way of suspending time.

For Steve, meaning came from building Kate a stone wall at our Maine cottage like the ones she loved in Ireland and New England. Over nine years, Steve fitted 30 tonnes of stones into place by hand, often labouring from sunup until dark. Friends and family brought us pebbles, shells, and coins to tuck between the rocks. Today, the wall contains a piece of tile from Ipanema Beach in Rio, rubble from the Great Wall of China, sand from the beaches at Normandy, France, and a rock from Antarctica. Kate's ashes are

there, too, along with those of her dog, Lola, who died in 2013. Our ashes will be there one day as well.

Even as some contentment crept back into our lives, seeing Kate's friends settle down, marry and have children was bittersweet. But three summers ago, a couple brought their baby to stay with us in Maine. For four days, I carried that little boy, took him on walks around town, and rocked him to sleep. I thought how happy Kate would have been to see it.

Our son had not yet met his wife, so no grandchildren were on the horizon for us. But I realized that even if I never had grandsons or granddaughters of my own, I could take delight in this new generation. That acceptance made what was to come all the more wonderful.

A little over two years ago, Daniel married a kind, bright, lovely woman, and he is now the proud father of two sons. The boys have opened up a new future for us. We're buying toys, playing with them in a sandbox, and daydreaming about taking them on hikes or building a treehouse in our yard in Maine.

When they visit us there, we will show them the stone wall their grandfather built. And we'll tell them stories of the short but magical life of their beautiful Aunt Kate.

## The Road from Here

When I reread my letters to Kate for the first time last spring, I felt glad I



*Steve and Nancy  
with their son, Daniel,  
and his family.*

was no longer in as dark a place as I was in those early years of grief. But I was also envious of how viscerally “near” to me Kate had seemed then. Relief, it seems, comes with a price.

Yet I know I’m a different and, in some ways, better person than I was 10 years ago. I’ve accepted some problems can’t be solved and some relationships can’t be salvaged. I’m a better listener. I’m more empathetic and less likely to judge. I’ve learnt that if you look for something not to like about a person, you will always find it.

I know how much a small gesture—a word of encouragement, a note on a birthday, a shared memory—can mean. And I’m more appreciative of life’s small joys: a whippoorwill’s call at dusk, a warm hug from a

friend, lifting a slippery grandson out of his bath.

Last November, we reached the 10-year milestone of our daughter’s death. It seems both a lifetime ago and yesterday that I last held her in my arms. We marked the day as we always do, walking

in the woods, watching her videos on TV, leaving flowers at the tree her friends planted on campus. Then we continued our journey.

The sadness and yearning are always with us, and we have good days and bad. But for the first time since Kate’s death, we can look to the future without despair. Nine years ago, I wrote that I had lost all fear of death when she died. That’s still true, but now I’m in less of a hurry to get there.

Douglas Hofstadter, in his book *I Am a Strange Loop*, suggests that when you die, you remain as “a set of afterglows, some brighter and some dimmer,” in the minds of those who loved you most. I remember so vividly the light that surrounded Kate in life. Whatever I do and wherever I go in the years to come, that glow will always be in my mind and heart. **R**



NEWS FROM THE

# World of Medicine

BY KELSEY KLOSS

## Healthiest Bedtime Reading Habits

During a two-week study, Brigham and Women's Hospital, USA, researchers assigned 12 participants to read either an e-book on an iPad or a printed book before they went to sleep each evening for five nights. Then they switched formats and read for another five nights. When people read on the iPad, they took longer to fall asleep and spent less time in REM sleep than with the traditional books. Researchers say using devices that emit blue light—including cell phones and laptops—before bedtime can have negative long-term health effects.

## Walk Off a Sugar Craving

In an Austrian study, about 50 overweight participants walked for 15 minutes on a treadmill one day and remained sedentary another day. In both cases, they were

given a test designed to trigger stress and were asked to unwrap chocolates but not eat it. After walking, participants reported fewer cravings during the test and while holding the candy than when they didn't walk.

## The Bacteria in a Smooch

How much do you share in a kiss? Dutch researchers tracked how kissing affected the oral bacteria of 21 couples. They asked one person in each pair to consume a probiotic yogurt drink with specific bacterial strains (to track the spread of germs) and then to share a ten-second kiss with his or her partner. The average kiss transferred as many as 80 million bacteria. Sounds icky? Not quite.

Experts say exposure to someone else's bacteria could help strengthen your immunity. ➔



## Preterm Delivery Linked to Heart Risks

Women who experience spontaneous preterm delivery (before 37 weeks) may have a greater likelihood of heart disease, according to a new Dutch study. Mothers of preemies had a 38 percent higher risk of coronary artery disease, a 71 percent higher risk of stroke, and more than double the risk of overall heart disease. Researchers say these women may be prone to inflammation, which is linked to preterm delivery and common among heart disease patients.

## New Diet Plan for Diabetes

People with diabetes are often told to eat six small meals throughout the day, but fewer, bigger meals may be better, according to a new study. Czech researchers analyzed data from a previous study comparing two diets in 54 people with type 2 diabetes. Participants ate six small meals per day for 12 weeks, then a large high-fibre breakfast and lunch (but no dinner) for 12 weeks. When they ate two meals a day, they reported feeling less hungry, lost more weight, had lower blood sugar, and noted stark improvements in mood.

## A Little Grandparenting Sharpens the Mind


Spending the right amount of time caring for grandchildren can keep the mind sharp, according to an Australian study of 186 older women.

Grandmothers who watched their grandchildren one day a week did better on cognitive tests than those who cared for grandchildren more often or not at all. Though the exact reason is unclear, researchers will continue to study how social engagement affects elder acuity.

## Open Up With Laughter

British researchers divided 112 students into three groups and asked each group to watch a short video together (without talking). One was a comedy routine, another was about golf, and a third showed nature scenes. Students then wrote a message about themselves to someone else. People who laughed more shared markedly more intimate information than those who did not. Laughter affects the release of endorphins, which increase someone's likelihood of revealing more intimate information, researchers say.

## Sleep and Success

The National Sleep Foundation, USA, recommends getting seven to nine hours of sleep every night, but a recent survey of 1400 people, conducted by United Kingdom-based market research firm YouGov, found that many successful people sleep far less. Investor Donald Trump reports three to four hours, President Barack Obama reports six hours, and records show that Thomas Edison slept for four to five hours each night. 

# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things You Should Know About First Impressions

BY LUC RINALDI

**1** You never get a second chance, the saying goes, to make a first impression. It turns out you may not even get that. Within seconds of seeing someone's face, you unconsciously make decisions that will influence your interactions.

**2** Those moments are difficult to overcome, says University of Toronto psychology professor Nicholas Rule. "Every time you see someone, even if it's someone you really know, you're making that first impression again."



**3** You can influence a first impression by wearing glasses, which imply intelligence, or facial piercings, which suggest rebelliousness, but research shows that a face can retain the same characteristics no matter how it's presented.

**4** Older faces are more telling than young ones. After decades of frowning, for example, a senior's muscles adopt an angrier baseline expression. So smile more—it won't hurt in the short term either.

**5** Yet another benefit of looking young: Leslie Zebrowitz, of Brandeis University, USA, has concluded that “babyfacedness” correlates to the likelihood of winning a court case.

**6** What happens after the first seconds? A firm handshake is important, but don't discount vulnerability and humility, which will encourage authentic interaction.

**7** Be conscious of body language. Don't cross your arms, don't slouch or fidget, and maintain eye contact and nod to indicate you're paying attention.

**8** “The best way to know what sort of first impression you're making is to ask someone you trust,” Rule says, explaining that for all the time we spend assessing

others, we're poor judges of ourselves.

**9** Ditch digital for the real thing. According to a trio of 2014 University of British Columbia studies, we make better first impressions face to face than through pictures or videos.

**10** Stop tweaking that Facebook profile. “Online, people try to do a lot of impression management,” Rule says, but it might not have the hoped-for effect. You might fixate on an aspect of your online presence deemed unimportant by others.

**11** First impressions have an evolutionary basis: early humans needed to quickly detect whether a person might deceive them or make for a suitable mate.

**12** If you're doing the judging, listen to your gut. Studies maintain that people can correctly determine a CEO's profitability and even a person's sexual orientation from a glimpse of their face.

**13** While helpful, intuition can indulge biases and stereotypes. An IIT-educated employer might be inclined to choose an IIT grad over more qualified alumni from another university. The same goes for race and social class.



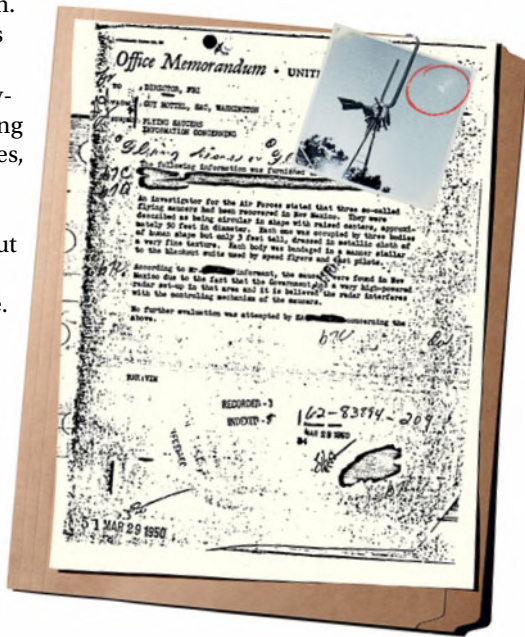
# The Flying Saucer File

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

IT'S THE MOST popular file in the [US] Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Vault—a high-tech electronic reading room that houses all kinds of bureau records released under that nation's Freedom of Information Act. Yet this file is only a single page, relaying an unconfirmed report from an Air Force investigator, and was never even followed up on. Dated 22 March 1950, the memo is addressed to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, and it reads: “They [the flying saucers] were described as being circular in shape with raised centres, approximately 50 feet [15m] in diameter. Each one was occupied by three bodies of human shape but only three feet tall, dressed in metallic cloth of a very fine texture.

“Each body was bandaged in a manner similar to the blackout suits used by speed flyers and test pilots.” The memo goes on to say that the saucers had been found because the government’s “high-powered radar” in Roswell, New Mexico, had interfered with “the controlling mechanism of the saucers,” which ultimately

resulted in the crashes. It ends stating that “no further evaluation was attempted.” Once the file went public in the late 1970s, people wondered what had happened to the supposed saucers. Unfortunately, without any further research from the FBI, the case became just another unsolved mystery. **R**





These eight famous logos each hide a quirky message

# Behind the Design

BY ANDY SIMMONS



## FEDEX

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** Honestly, we thought it just read *FedEx*.

**WRONG!** Look again, in the space between the *E* and the *x*. Yeah, it's an arrow pointing forward, perhaps to suggest speedy delivery.



## WIKIPEDIA

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** The Wikipedia people were so busy collecting information, they forgot to finish their logo.

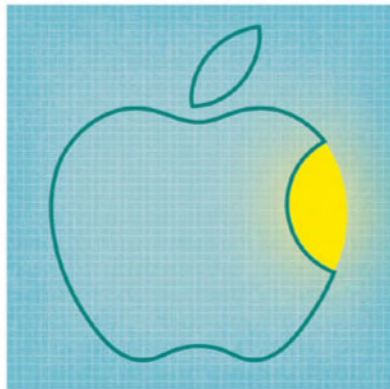
**WRONG!** The unfinished globe, made of puzzle pieces with characters from various languages, represents the “incomplete nature” of the company’s mission to be the go-to information portal—and the fact that a site built on user submissions can never be complete.



## AMAZON

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** The grin under the letters *amaz* depicts CEO Jeff Bezos smiling at all the merchandise his company is moving.

**WRONG!** The arrow broadcasts the wide variety of stuff—from A to Z—to be had on Amazon.



## APPLE

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** They ripped off the Bible, the bitten apple symbolizing the fruit from the tree of knowledge.

**WRONG!** The designer made the bite mark for scale, so that a smaller logo would still look like an apple and not a cherry.

## BASKIN-ROBBINS

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** Who cares ... it's ice cream!

**WRONG!** While stuffing our faces, we missed the *31* in the initials, as in the number of flavours the company began offering in 1953—one for every day of the month.



## SUN MICROSYSTEMS

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** A lot of *U*'s, as in, "U should buy Sun products."

**WRONG!** Turn the logo around, and the *Sun* is always there. ➡





## TOBLERONE

### WHAT WE THOUGHT:

Mmmmm ... a mountain of chocolate ...

**WRONG!** Hey, what's that bear doing on the side of that mountain of chocolate? It's the official symbol of the Swiss town of Bern, the original home of Toblerone.



## DELL

**WHAT WE THOUGHT:** The *E* was on its side because someone thought it looked nice.

**WRONG!** Michael Dell announced that the goal of his company was to "turn the world on its ear." So it's been said he started with an *E*.



Sources: [webdesignerdepot.com](http://webdesignerdepot.com) and [wonderfulengineering.com](http://wonderfulengineering.com)



## YOU CAN CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS...

*Sometimes relatives can do the strangest things—as recounted by Tweeters posting on the topic of #myweirdrelative.*

- My grandpa's headlights broke. Instead of fixing them, he taped torches to the front bumper (@Lifewithjacob).
- My uncle got banned from a Chinese buffet for trying to take home 50 crab legs in his pocket (@Landofcamelot).
- My cousin lost a tooth. Instead of giving it to the tooth fairy, he taped it to a stick to use as a weapon "like his ancestors did" (@yeskiaa).
- My uncle always wraps our birthday gifts in the obituaries to remind of how lucky we are to celebrate another year (@Doofenyoyo).

# Quotable Quotes



“  
Social change is better achieved by being for something than against something.

HELENE GAYLE, CEO

THE SMILE IS THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE.

VICTOR BORGE, pianist

**Success or the lack of it has a way to make you realize what your boundaries are.**

R. MADHAVAN, actor, in *Bombay Times*

**IN THREE WORDS I CAN SUM UP EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNT ABOUT LIFE: IT GOES ON.**

ROBERT FROST



A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

JOAN WALSH ANGLUND, children's author

For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through love.

CARL SAGAN

**WORK LIKE THERE IS SOMEONE WORKING 24 HOURS A DAY TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU.**

MARK CUBAN, entrepreneur

**If you don't stick to your values when they're being tested, they're not values: They're hobbies.**

JON STEWART, comedian



# Who Made That?



An idea whose time had come

## Contact Lens

BY DANIEL ENGBER FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

IN 1887, a German doctor named Theodor Samisch saw a patient whose lower eyelid had been destroyed by cancer, leaving his cornea exposed and desiccated and his lashes curling inward. To preserve the patient's vision, Samisch contracted with two brothers who specialized in artificial eyes. They

made a protective shell of handblown glass, transparent in the middle and opaque around the edge, with reddish threads for blood vessels. "I have worn the glass supplied by you continuously, day and night," the patient wrote to the brothers 21 years later, "and my eye has always felt very well with it."

© VSTOCK/ALAMY



The idea of using rounded glass for vision problems had been around since at least 1827, when the English astronomer and inventor John Herschel proposed that a glass capsule filled with animal jelly could correct an irregular cornea. But no one put it into practice until 1887. That was also the year that a medical student named August Muller asked a microscope maker in Berlin to create a glass device, cast from a cadaver's eye, to correct his severe myopia. Meanwhile, the Swiss physician Adolf Eugen Fick was testing contact-lens designs on rabbits, colleagues and himself. "It's a bit like buses," says Timothy Bowden, a British optician and contact-lens historian. "Nothing happens for ages, and then they all come at once."

The early lenses were much bigger than what we have today, and much less comfortable. Wearers could abide them for only a few hours at a time. Eventually, a lack of oxygen to the cornea would fog their vision and make lights appear to have coloured

halos. At the first signs of this condition, known as Sattler's veil, patients were advised to remove their lenses for an hour.

Softer plastic made these problems less intense. In the 1950s, a Czech chemist named Otto Wichterle invented a polymer called HEMA and used it to create a more pliable con-

tact lens. Wearers still suffered from too little oxygen and Sattler's veil, but they no longer had to remove their contacts for lengthy periods. Instead, they could slide the flexible lenses to the sides of their eyes to give their corneas a break.

Finally, in the early 1980s, a Danish ophthalmologist named Michael Bay devised a way to make lenses disposable. Until then, people kept their contacts until they were so dirty and degraded as to be unwearable. Bay's invention made the contact lens safer and more appealing to the average user, Bowden says. "Johnson & Johnson bought that technology and made Bay a multi-millionaire."

**R**



## WEAR AND TEAR

**Most people who wear contact lenses replace them monthly or every two weeks. In the last few years, daily disposables have gained in popularity.**

THE NEW YORK TIMES (APRIL 13, 2014) ©2014 BY THE NEW YORK TIMES CO., NEW YORK, NY 10036



Insanity is hereditary. You can get it from your children.

**SAM LEVENSON.** Source: *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* by Gyles Brandreth (OUP)

# That's Outrageous!

WHY KILL?



**WHILE ARMED FORCES** personnel seek “one rank, one pension,” what happens to retired Army dogs and horses? The dogs detect explosives, guard bases, track criminals and are invaluable during disaster relief. Horses serve in difficult terrain and add pomp to ceremonies. But after years of dedicated service, how does our Army retire its animals?


They are killed.

With “humane euthanasia,” after they’re found unfit for a month of active service, is the shocking response to a recent RTI query.

An anonymous retired Army officer told *The Times of India* that the Army kills dogs even if they have a few years to live—after they’re judged unable to perform duties. So why not

get them adopted? “To protect the location of Army bases,” he explained.

Meanwhile, Major General (Retd) R.M. Kharb, chairman of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), cites a different reason. “Euthanasia... is a policy decision...,” he says, because NGOs and animal welfare groups can’t maintain the animals the way the Army did. Oh, really?

Says Dawn Williams of the Blue Cross of India, a Chennai animal shelter: “Retired dogs just need food and shelter. Out of the huge funds the Army gets every year, they could easily rehabilitate them.” The AWBI has written to the defence ministry to re-examine this heartless policy so that these animals get the peaceful retirement they deserve. —DEVEN KANAL 

MANJUNATH KIRAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

IT PAYS TO ENRICH YOUR

# Word Power

*At long last, a quiz dedicated to plain ol' fun! Inspired by The 100 Funniest Words in English by Robert Beard, these picks are all a mouthful, and some even sport serious definitions (others ... well, not so much). Enjoy weaving them into your dinner-table conversation tonight. Answers on next page.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

**1. flummox** ('fluh-muks) *v.*—A: laugh out loud. B: confuse. C: ridicule.

**2. crudivore** ('crew-dih-vor) *n.*—A: foulmouthed person. B: dust bin. C: eater of raw food.

**3. hoosegow** ('hoos-gow) *n.*—A: jail. B: scaredy-cat. C: strong liquor, usually moonshine.

**4. mollycoddle** ('mah-lee-kah-dl) *v.*—A: treat with an absurd degree of attention. B: mix unwisely. C: moo or imitate a cow.

**5. donnybrook** ('doh-nee-bruk) *n.*—A: rapid stream. B: wild brawl. C: stroke of luck.

**6. cantankerous** (kan-'tan-keh-res) *adj.*—A: very sore. B: hard to deal with. C: obnoxiously loud.

**7. codswallop** ('kohdz-wah-lep) *n.*—A: sound produced by a hiccup. B: rare rainbow fish. C: nonsense.

**8. doozy** ('doo-zee) *n.*—A: extraordinary one of its kind. B: incomprehensible song. C: double feature.

**9. discombobulate** (dis-kehm-'boh-byoo-layt) *v.*—A: take apart. B: fail. C: upset or frustrate.

**10. hootenanny** ('hoo-teh-na-nee) *n.*—A: group of owls. B: folksinging event. C: child's caregiver.

**11. yahoo** ('yah-hoo) *n.*—A: overzealous fan. B: pratfall. C: dumb person.

**12. kerfuffle** (ker-'fuh-fuhl) *n.*—A: failure to ignite. B: down pillow or blanket. C: disturbance.

**13. absquatulate** (abz-'kwah-chew-layt) *v.*—A: abscond or flee. B: stay low to the ground. C: utterly flatten.

**14. skullduggery** (skul-'duh-geh-ree) *n.*—A: Shakespearean prank. B: underhanded behaviour. C: graveyard.

**15. flibbertigibbet** (flih-ber-tee-'jih-bet) *n.*—A: silly and flighty person. B: snap of the fingers. C: hex or curse.

## Answers

**1. flummox**—[B] confuse. Tanya is easily *flummoxed* by any changes to the schedule.

**2. crudivore**—[C] eater of raw food. To help boost my health, I'm declaring myself a *crudivore*.

**3. hoosegow**—[A] jail. After protesting a touch too loudly in court, Sushant found himself in the *hoosegow*.

**4. mollycoddle**—[A] treat with an absurd degree of attention. "Lakshmi's my only grandchild—I'll *mollycoddle* her all I want!"

**5. donnybrook**—[B] wild brawl. It took both umpires to quell the *donnybrook* on the pitch.

**6. cantankerous**—[B] hard to deal with. The comic was greeted by a *cantankerous* crowd at his debut.

**7. codswallop**—[C] nonsense. "Oh, *codswallop*! I never went near that bowl of chocolates," Dad barked.

**8. doozy**—[A] extraordinary one of its kind. That was a *doozy* of a storm—luckily, we dodged the two downed trees.

**9. discombobulate**—[C] upset or frustrate. The goal of the simulator: *discombobulate* even the sharpest of pilots.

**10. hootenanny**—[B] folksinging event. After the concert, let's head up the hill for the informal *hootenanny*.

**11. yahoo**—[C] dumb person. Please try not to embarrass me at the party, you big *yahoo*.

**12. kerfuffle**—[C] disturbance. I was referring to that minor *kerfuffle* called World War II.

**13. absquatulate**—[A] abscond or flee. Upon opening the door, Raj watched the new puppy *absquatulate* with his sneaker.

**14. skullduggery**—[B] underhanded behaviour. The chairman was infamous for resorting to *skullduggery* during contract negotiations.

**15. flibbertigibbet**—[A] silly and flighty person. Do I have to spend the entire ride with that *flibbertigibbet* next to me?!

### PIRATES IN THE HOUSE

Robert Beard's list of funny words also includes *filibuster*, which you probably know as a long political speech. But did you know it's also related to pirates? The Spanish *filibustero* means "freebooter," a pirate or plunderer. So you might say a politician who *filibusters* is stealing time—legislative piracy!

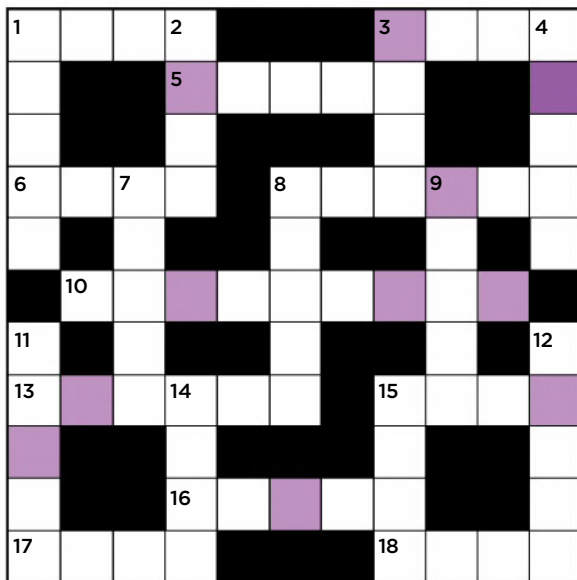
### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**9 & below:** Amusing  
**10–12:** Hysterical  
**13–15:** Gut-busting

# Brain Teasers

## Try this crossword.

The highlighted letters spell a hot political topic involving people across several national borders.



## ACROSS

1. Constituency (4)
3. Repair (4)
5. Shooting area (5)
6. Rim (4)
8. Colonize (6)
10. Friend (9)
13. Chess piece (6)
15. Deer (4)
16. Permission (5)
17. Revise (4)
18. Import tax (4)

## DOWN

1. Scatter (5)
2. Genuine (4)
3. Dissolve (4)
4. Scuba user (5)
7. Entire amount (5)
8. Rascal (5)
9. Game fish (5)
11. On high (5)
12. Great pain (5)
14. Stop (4)
15. Discard (4)

**ANSWERS**

Across:  
 1. Seat 3. Mend 5. Range  
 6. Edge 8. Settle  
 10. Companion 13. Bishop  
 15. Stag 16. Leave  
 17. Edit 18. Duty

Down:  
 1. Strew 2. True 3. Melt  
 4. Diver 7. Gross 8. Scamp  
 9. Trout 11. Above  
 12. Agony 14. Halt 15. Shed  
 The highlighted letters  
 spell Immigration



# Studio



**UDAAN BY SONAL VARSHNEYA,  
ETCHING ON PAPER, 50 X 33 CM (APPROX), 2014**

Lucknow-based artist Sonal Varshneya brings together folklore and the contemporary world. The “modern” girl here aspires to an ambitious upward flight [*udaan*] to achieve her goals. She must also be clever—symbolized by the old curious cat. “Humans and animals share an equation,” she says, “and so I juxtapose them in most of my works.”

Sonal, 30, who has a master’s in visual arts (MVA), specialized in print-making at Lalit Kala Sansthan in Agra. She has won many accolades for her works, which adorn collections in India and abroad.

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